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MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

■ ST ■ AMIGA ■ C64 ■
CPC ■ SPECTRUM ■ PC
■ NINTENDO ■ SEGA ■

A PC ENGINE FOR BRITAIN

The secret's out! See page 27...



RED hot TAPE

US technology is transforming the humble video tape recorder into a fully interactive games system. Find out more on page 35...

Plus...the latest games, including *Vette* and *The Untouchables*; *David Braben* on *Elite 2*; and a maniac's guide to 16-bit racing sims





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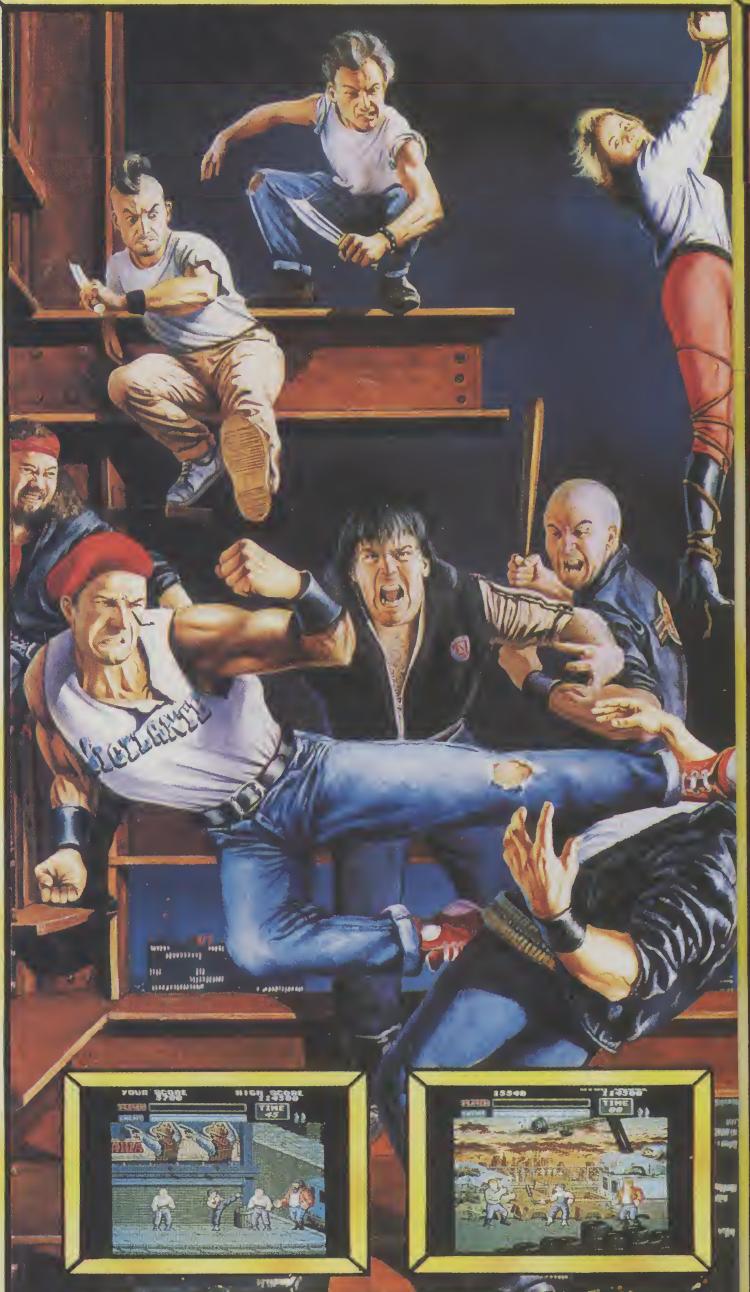


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Screen shots from various systems.

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ACE



EMAP B&CP
Priory Court
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU
Tel: 01-251 6222
Fax: 01-490 0991

Editor
Steve Cooke

Reviews Editor
Eugene Lacey

Staff Writer
Laurence Scotford

Design Editor
Jim Willis

Contributors
Andy Wilton
Ciaran Brennan
Tony Dillon
Kati Hamza
John Minson
John Cook
Pete Connor
Tony Ruben

Additional Design By
Richard Slater
Phil Hendy

Advertisement Manager
Gary Williams

Deputy Advertising Manager
Jerry Hall

Advertising Production
Sue Lee

Publisher
Terry Pratt

SUBSCRIPTIONS

EMAP Frontline, Subscriptions Dept.
1 Lincoln Court, Lincoln Road,
Peterborough, PE1 2RP
0733 555161

COLOUR ORIGINATION
Latent Image, Balmoral Grove, N7

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While NEC dither, Konix delay, Sega stall, and Nintendo dally, a small British company has produced a proper PAL version of the infamous NEC PC Engine. It's unauthorised, unofficial, but available - and it works a lot better than any other unit we've seen to date, thanks to some careful re-engineering...



RED HOT TAPE 35

Who is Ludwig Von Drake? And why is so much attention being lavished by games technologists on the humble VCR? John Cook reveals the secrets of System X interactive video and explains how new developments could get Walt Disney and Cinemaware taped up.

THE MANIAC'S GUIDE 89

Which 16-bit racing game takes pole position? And how does *Continental Circus*, just released, fare against the competition? Tony Dillon, who was born on the back seat of a Corvette with a joystick in his mouth, reports...



Continental Circus: leading the pack?

ALL THIS AND ELITE TWO 41

David Braben, author of *Elite* and *Zarch*, and Britain's most respected programmer, grants a rare interview to Eugene Lacey. New technology, new directions...and *Elite Two*.

IN SEQUENCE 103

Jon Bates checks out *Music X* and *Virtuoso* and discovers ever more powerful ways of getting your songs into silicon.

Have you ever wondered which game really tops the reviewers' charts?

THE FINAL VERDICT

This month ACE introduces a dramatic new section that gives hitherto unavailable information about the games we play and the companies who produce them. Every month, you can turn to The Final Score section in the Pink Pages and discover:

- how **every** title reviewed that month by **any** reputable games magazine has scored overall;
- which **software houses** are currently at the top of the games **league**; and which games are **No. 1 for each machine**.
- **PLUS** how you can win some **great prizes**!



Rick Dangerous - Game of the month?

PSYGNOSIS

Psygnosis are offering five lucky Amiga/ST owners the chance

SCREEN TEST INDEX

Vette is this month's star game, accompanied by *Batman*, *Day of the Viper*, *Altered Beast*, *Shinobi*, and a host of other contenders for autumn gold.

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GAMEPLAY 2000

Right at this very moment in the City, huge fortunes are changing place not over oil, or transport, or gold, but over the rights (they're called 'intellectual property rights') to the great names in entertainment. If you have the right, for example, to exploit Michael Jackson's music, you're a very rich man indeed. But by the year 2000 all the conversion outlets for these rights will have been exhausted.

You'll have seen the film, read the book, scratched the LP, lost the musicassettes, bought the CD, and borrowed the video. There's only one other outlet left for the big boys to make money out of: computer games. And believe us, there are some very powerful people getting very excited right now about computer entertainment. Watch this space...for the next twenty years.

GAMEPLAY

SCREEN TEST 41

Find out what happens when the team that programmed Falcon power up a Corvette and burn across San Francisco in full vector-graphic glory: the result is Vette and a 926 ACE Rating. And don't miss *Day of the Viper*, *Batman*, and the *Populous Promised Lands* disk either...

ARCADE ACE 22

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F16 Combat Pilot powers onto the Amiga, and PC owners can drool over *Baal*, *Menace*, and *Microprose Soccer*.

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There's a man in Coventry who makes funny noises at his disks and claims this helps them load more easily. Woof!

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ACE is the only magazine to bring you authoritative coverage of tomorrow's entertainment technology today – a subscription keeps you up-to-date and gets you a free issue into the bargain.



RAINBOW WARRIOR – the most important launch of 1997

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NINTENDO HELPLINE •
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ACE NEWS

SAM COMES OUT AT LAST!



Bruce Gordon and Alan Miles with the new SAM coupe computer.

MGT's long awaited SAM Coupe has finally appeared in its finished form. The machine was presented to the press in London on Tuesday 12th September by its creators Bruce Gordon and Alan Miles of Miles Gordon Technology.

SAM is unusual in being an 8-bit machine, while most of the machines (consoles excepted) launched over recent years have been based around 16-bit microprocessors. SAM uses the ever popular Z80B processor which runs at a tidy 6 megahertz. The choice of processor is not really surprising since one of SAM's main assets is its Spectrum compatibility.

Because the SAM should quite happily run most existing 48k Spectrum software, there is already a huge range of ready to run games available for the machine, making it a good upgrade path for existing Spectrum owners.

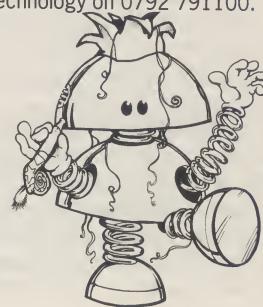
SAM also boasts a superior BASIC, written by Dr. Andy Wright, author of Beta BASIC, as well as 256k RAM upgradeable to 512K, and 6 channel, stereo sound. In addition to the standard Spectrum screen mode, SAM has three other modes, giving up to 512 x 192 pixel resolution in four colours from a palette of 128. There is also a

lower resolution 256 x 192 pixel mode which allows 16 colours on screen at once.

The machine also supports a mouse, lightpen, and lightgun, parallel or serial printer, Midi, and one or two 3.5 inch disk drives, in addition to a standard cassette deck.

Judging by the specification we have seen, SAM is undoubtedly a very nice machine. It boasts better sound than the ST (not hard to achieve admittedly), and faster disk drives than both the ST or Amiga. But despite this the question still remains as to whether an 8-bit machine can compete in a market that is now dominated by more powerful 16-bit machines.

It is entirely possible that SAM will attract Spectrum owners who have yet to upgrade, but, in the long term, MGT will have to win the support of most of the major software developers if its smart new micro is to survive. Further details from Miles Gordon Technology on 0792 791100.



SAM the cartoon character!

RIDE OF THE FUTURE



Artist's Impression

Innovative US company Walt Disney is utilising cutting edge computer graphic and simulator technologies in *Body Wars*, the latest attraction at the Walt Disney World

theme park in Florida, USA. *Body Wars* is a collaboration between Walt Disney and Industrial Light and Magic - a division of Lucasfilm which created the special effects for the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* trilogies, *Close Encounters of the Close Kind* and *ET*. The ride is an fantastic voyage-type journey through the immune system of the human body, using Disney's newly developed theater-simulator technology, where the whole audience experiences a real physical sensation from sitting in the cinema and watching the film.

AMIGA IS TV STAR IN DENMARK

Danish TV has come up with what must be the ultimate Amiga game. The game, *Oswald The Polar Berry*, casts you as a cute Polar bear. The object is to jump between ice blocks while avoiding birds, whales, and mean Eskimos. As well as avoiding the nasties you must try to collect as many packages as possible. The number of packages you collect affects your score at the finish line.

'So,' I hear you cry, 'what is so amazing about that?' Well, what makes *Oswald* a little different from the average Amiga game is that it is played on Saturday nights on National TV and viewed by thousands of people. Unlike most game shows, the players do not even have to be at the studio: the keypad on an ordinary push-button phone is used in place of the joystick. The computer at the television station interprets the tones sent by the players phone and converts them into movements. Obviously this won't work if you have a dial-phone (at any rate you'd have to be pretty quick with the index finger to manage with one!).

The prize you receive depends on the number of packages you manage to collect. Of

course the real bonus for Danish Game addicts is the opportunity to have their skills admired by television viewers nationwide. Bad news for joystick wallies though...

As telecommunications and microcomputer technology become more sophisticated we are likely to see more applications of computer entertainment on a larger scale.

Television games like *Oswald the Polar Berry* and Multi-User Games like *MUD* and *Shades* are pointing the way towards more social computer entertainment than the present dominant modes.

It is entirely possible that the single gamer using his computer or console alone at home could soon become a thing of the past!



Oswald — Denmark's latest TV Star!

LOGOTRON WRIGHT OFF

Michael Heyward, the former Managing Director of Logotron, has bought the recreation division of the company. The new operation will go under the name Logotron Entertainment Limited but will be totally independent. The new company also has rights to the entire range of existing Logotron games. These include *Xor*, (one of the first games to receive an ACE 900+ rating), *Starry*, and more recently, *Archipelagos*.

Eight new titles are planned for the coming year, together with specific titles for the anticipated 16-bit console market.

Herbert Wright, who was formerly publisher of the Logotron range, will not be playing a rôle in the new company. Wright took over as publisher shortly after the launch of Logotron's first game, *Xor*, and has been largely responsible for its success in the 16-bit market, and for making headway in the tough American market.

Herbert is currently promoting the programming duo responsible for *Starry*, but he is keeping his long term plans closely guarded for the moment.

The education and business divisions of

Logotron have been sold to the Longman Group, making them the largest educational software operation in Britain. The new group will be called, rather inventively we feel, Longman-Logotron, and will be marketing a product range made up from both companies lists.

THE CHALLENGE

By splitting away from their parent company, Logotron are bucking the trend for software houses to get larger and larger and less and less independent. Although it is becoming more difficult for small independent operations to survive in what has increasingly become a cutthroat industry, Logotron have proved a worthy contender for the big boys with *XOR* being one of the first 900+ ACE-rated titles.

Unfortunately there's no doubt that today's games are demanding more and more cash to get from the drawing board to the market. When CDI and other labour-intensive media become more popular, the costs could put the small publishers out of business altogether.

DELUXE PAINT II ENHANCED FOR PC OWNERS



Tutankhamun having a ball...

PC owners who use *DPaint II* from Electronic Arts can now upgrade to an enhanced version for £30. If you do not yet own a version of *Dpaint*, the enhanced version can be purchased for £99.99.

The enhanced features include Poster-sized printing,

sculpted colour fonts, picture preview, a slide show routine, and new brush modes. All of the additions seem fairly cosmetic, so it might be better to try before you buy. Details from Electronic Arts on 0753 46465.

HELP AT LAST FOR NINTENDO ADDICTS

Are you a Nintendo Owner who just can't stay away from your machine? Do you suffer from severe attacks of frustration because you find it impossible to finish *Super Mario Bros*? Then help is at last at hand.

A Nintendo helpline has been set up by Club Nintendo. A 'trained and helpful Game Counselor' will be on hand to help you with all your personal Nintendo problems. So if you're a little depressed because your player sprites all seem suicidal, why not give the helpline a call on 062 665500 for a technique or cheat to inject a little life into your gameplay.

The Club Nintendo magazine is published every other month, and includes reviews, previews, readers letters, and Hints and Tips. You can subscribe free for a year by sending in the card included with new Game Paks or by sending your name and address, along with your Nintendo's serial number to: Club Nintendo, PO Box 30, Coventry, CV1 3BR.

The existence of both the helpline and the club are signs of the growing popularity of Consoles in this country, and of the increased commitment within the industry to cultivating the revived console market.

MUTE PC OWNERS GET SOUND FOR A PRICE

PC owners who are exasperated at the continuing lack of decent sound generation on even the newest PCs can achieve relief with the Games Blaster from Data Liberation Limited. This nifty little add-on boasts no less than 12 stereo polyphonic voices, a 2.5 watt amplifier, and volume control. It will connect to headphones, a stereo system or directly to speakers.

The unit is already supported by games from Sierra On-Line, Electronic Arts, Mediagenic, Cinemaware and Origin. As a taster, it comes supplied with a copy of *Silpheed* from Sierra On-Line.

Dedicated music software to drive the unit is available from Creative Labs, the designers of the module. This includes an intelligent organ program that is supplied with the package.

The module comes as a half-size expansion board for the princely sum of £119 exclusive of VAT, and will be launched at the forthcoming PC Show. Further details from Data Liberation Limited on 0983 864674.

The market for the Games Blaster is going to consist almost entirely of PC owners who use their machines for entertainment. If a company like Data Liberation can recognise the size and strength of such a market, then isn't it time that IBM opened its eyes and began to recognise that the PC is no longer a micro exclusive to the business user, but has generated a large following of other enthusiasts as well.

SPEAKEASY

Good news for software developers comes in the form of the AMT Speech Development System from Applied Microsystems Technology. The SDS uses revolutionary software techniques to achieve a high rate of data compression without sacrificing the quality of the reproduction. The unit achieves a compression rate of 1% and a data rate of just 2 kilobits per second.

For those not technically minded, this means that it is possible to squeeze five minutes of speech into the amount of memory previously consumed by a mere three seconds using conventional techniques. What's more, it still sounds nice!

TOO LATE FOR GAZZA?

Empire have come up with the most incredibly original game idea ever! A soccer simulation endorsed by one of the leading lights of the game: Paul Gascoigne. Only trouble is it's been done so often before.

Empire have rather kindly said that they don't mind if you

don't support Spurs — you can still play Gazza's Super Soccer. But whether there are any soccer fans out there who still don't own a computer simulation remains to be seen. If you're one of them, contact Empire on 0268 541126 for further information.



Paul Gascoigne indulging in a little post-goal playfulness!

The implications of a technique like this being applied to games software are intriguing. Until now, when speech has appeared in entertainment software, it has been either ridiculously minimal or of appalling quality. The SMS could very well be the first practical solution. The only disadvantage is that the unit will set you back £3,000. Rich companies can contact AMT on 01 450 3222.

DRAGON USERS LEFT OUT IN THE COLD AGAIN

The 8-bit Micro show will be held at the Tamworth Arts Centre on the 26th November. The show caters for owners of the Commodore 64, 16, and +4, the Atari

INTERPHASE OUT SOON FROM MIRRORSOFT

After an incredibly long development period, *Interphase* is finally ready. The game is set in the future, a time when experiencing other people's dreams has become the equivalent of video games (Can it be true?).

As a one-time professional dreamer you must enter the mainframe computer of The Corporation in an attempt to stop them enslaving the minds of the populace.

The interior of the computer is generated with super-fast 3D

filled vector graphics that make *Starglider* look positively primitive. The game, in which you adjust security systems to allow your female companion to break into the Mainframe building, also looks very playable.

A full review will be printed in next month's issue, but from what we've seen so far, *Interphase* looks like a winner.

Details from Mirrorsoft on 01-928 1454.



XL/XE, the BBC Micro and Electron, Spectrum, Oric, Amstrad CPC, MSX, and Einstein. As usual Dragon owners have been forgotten about, not to mention Memotech owners. But that's enough moaning from us, we're pleased to hear that 8-bit micros are still being supported at all.

There are still some spaces available at £25 for a 6 foot stand (plus £5 if you need a power point.) Contact Delmont Betts at 8 Healey, Lakeside, Tamworth, Staffs. B77 2RF.

AMIGA ANIMATIONS

A computer animation festival was held between August 26th and September 2nd by the Amiga Centre, Scotland to coincide with the Edinburgh International Festival. The entries were judged by Len Breen of Middlesex Polytechnic,

Jack Garrow of In Video Broadcast Ltd, and Nick Masters of TV Production Magazine.

The winners were Mark Wirt for *Maggie Goes Green*; Jonathon Grant (aged 9!) for *J's Pointers*, Dileep Sharma for *Royal Bank of Scotland Logo*, and John Armstrong for *Engine*.

In addition there were three second category winners, and 11 other prize winners. The prizes were donated by ten companies associated with computers or animation.

Martin Lowe from the Amiga Centre commented: 'We have seen some amazing talent within the Amiga community and look forward to next year's competition entries. The exhibition has attracted a wide range of people, some who have never before seen computer animation.'

For further details concerning the festival contact Martin Lowe on 031 557 4242.

THE ACE CHALLENGE

The PC Engine, reported on this month's issue, the Konix Multi-System, the Amiga – even the Commodore 64 in its day – have all proved that imaginative hardware design can generate some truly great software.

All of us who are dedicated to games playing must realise that we now stand on the threshold of a whole new age of computerised entertainment. Games are moving away from their old Space Invader image and into a new age of mass appeal.

Right now, much of the attention is being paid to consoles, since these appear to deliver more techno-bangs per buck than the current range of 16-bit computers. But it would be a great shame if the micro we all know and love were to disappear and be replaced by small lumps of featureless plastic – however good the games are.

Hence the ACE Challenge. A staggering £20,000 to be divided between the manufacturer of the ACE Challenge Machine (subject to certain conditions as outlined in the ACE Challenge Charter – see below) and the programmer of the first ACE rated 900+ game to run on the new micro.

But it's not the money that's important – all the pound signs tell you is how much we're committed to seeing some red hot, games-dedicated hardware making its appearance on our sitting room tables.

As an ACE reader, you'll doubtless be as committed to the future of computer entertainment as we are. We don't want to monopolise the discussion – we want to involve you too. So if you want to contribute your own points of view in ACE, either on the ACE Challenge itself, or on the subject of Advanced Computer Entertainment in general, put pen to paper NOW and tell the world. We'll reserve a special section in the magazine each month for those of you who write in about the Challenge, together with your suggestions, criticisms, and perhaps even your own challenges!

We'll also keep you informed about any developments related

addressed A4 envelope.

Keep your fingers crossed, and remember: electronic entertainment is THE watchword for the 1990's. As an ACE reader, you're right in the front line of the revolution.

IT'S NO MYTH

Here's the exclusive 16-bit screenshot of System Three's highly

talented and re-released products, selling for a meagre £4.99 each. The 21 titles scheduled for immediate release include: *Road Wars* (ST/Amiga – the Amiga version is a specially enhanced version not previously released), *Speedboat Assassin* (ST/Amiga), *California Golf* (PC only), *Kelly X* (ST/Amiga) and *World Darts* (ST, Amiga and PC). With the average high cost of 16-bit games, let's hope other software companies follow Virgin/Mastertronic's historic lead...



System Three's Myth – not to be confused with the Magnetic Scrolls adventure of the same name.

to the ACE Challenge, whether they be in hardware or software. Not only will we be printing news in the magazine, but we're offering readers a chance to receive a personal update – all you have to do is send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope (A4 size) marked Challenge Update and we'll send you an information sheet as soon as we have something to report. That way, you'll be kept in touch with some of the most exciting developments in entertainment technology today.

You can also receive full details of the ACE Challenge itself in the Challenge Charter, a document that includes the full conditions under which the £20,000 becomes payable. These are outlined on the back page of the ACE Challenge booklet (on the front cover of this issue – or write to us for a copy if yours is missing) but the Charter contains the full spec.

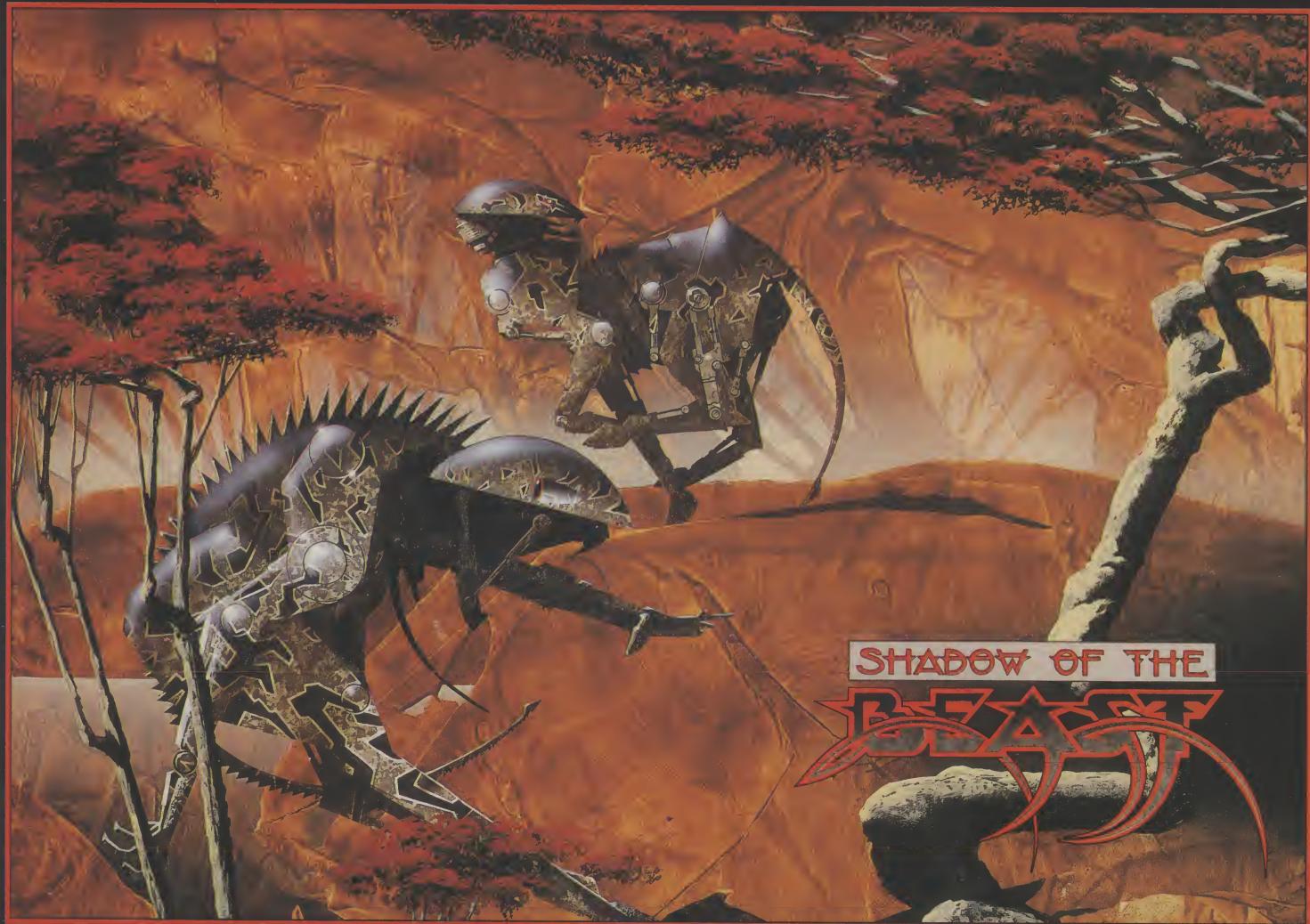
Leading budget software company Virgin/Mastertronic has launched a startling new low cost 16-bit budget label. 16 Blitz games are a combination of origi-

GET YOURSELF A WALKING, TALKING PC ROBOT

What will those crazy Yanks think up next? The latest peripheral for your trusty old PC is Newton, the intelligent robot that can walk, talk, work, play, learn, teach and even make the tea! This 32" high robot uses a sophisticated speech synthesis and recognition system allowing it to understand and act on personal human instructions. Newton's internal control mechanics are controlled by an on-board microcomputer, with a PC providing the application programs. Newton also includes a built-in 300 baud modem for communication to the outside world. Further details can be obtained from US developer SynPet on 0101 208 376 0303.

THE CHEAP-EST 16-BIT GAMES EVER!

Leading budget software company Virgin/Mastertronic has launched a startling new low cost 16-bit budget label. 16 Blitz



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PSYGNOSIS - GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Screen Shots from the Amiga version

AMIGA £34.95/ATARI ST COMING SOON

ACE LETTERS

THE SOUND OF MUSIC, THE JOY OF CONSOLES, THE FRUSTRATIONS OF FLIGHT SIMS...YOU WROTE IT, WE PRINTED IT...

FLY ME

I must confess that I bought my Atari ST for the sole purpose of flying Aircraft Simulations. There are plenty of them around at the moment, and no end of them waiting in the wings, so you might think that I would be a happy armchair pilot. Sadly I'm not, and it's all to do with the variation in keyboard controls.

Why can't the programmers standardise on a keyboard control system that is common to all simulators? If I press the "U" key on *Combat Pilot*, the F16 undercarriage comes up; on *Falcon*, I get yanked out of the cockpit for a satellite view of the aircraft.. To get the undercarriage up on *Falcon*, I have to press "G" for "Gear"; if I do that on *Combat Pilot*, I'm requesting a talk-down landing from the control tower (which is a bit embarrassing when you've only just taken off!). It's all very confusing, and leads one to the conclusion that it's better to decide on one simulation and stick with it, rather than keep buying the new ones that come out and have to go through the process of learning a totally new set of commands.

The one I'm sticking with is *Combat Pilot*. Its graphics aren't as good as *Falcon*, but it has an extra feature that wins hands down (or Head-Up as the Fighter Jocks would say): an option for two-joystick control. You just click on the computer graphic on the menu-screen, and select the option. Then, when you arrive at the cockpit screen, you simply unplug the mouse, and plug in a second joystick; and suddenly you have the throttle control in your left hand, where it should be, just like a real aeroplane. You also have left and right rudder control on this stick, whilst on the right-hand stick you have the normal yaw and pitch directional controls.

The ability to change speed with a flick of the left joystick is exceptionally useful in dogfighting and ground attack, and saves fumbling for the "plus" and "minus" keys like you have to do when flying *Falcon*, just as the *Mig 21* is about to blow you away.

So take note, you future Flight Simulation Programmers, two joy-

PUMP UP THAT VOLUME!

PRIZE LETTER

Why don't most reviewers comment on the brilliant music included in some games for the computers with good soundchips? The Amiga has a custom chip and facilities for an amplifier to be connected and the results of certain groups' efforts to include modern music in games is sometimes quite stunning. So let's have a mention in the future if you can. To show you what I mean, I have compiled a top 10 list of the best tunes that my Amiga/C64 comrades and I pump up the volume for:

Game	Computer	Composer/company
BLOOD MONEY: main theme	Amiga	Ray Norrish/Psygnosis
SANXION: main theme	C64 (origin)	Rob Hubbard/Thalamus
RENEGADE: loading music	C64	Unknown/Imagine
SWORD OF SODAN: main theme	Amiga	Julian Lefay/Discovery
LED STORM: all themes	Amiga	T & M Follin/US Gold
SAVAGE: Stages 1 and 3	Amiga	Kevin Collier/Firebird
HYBRIS: main theme	Amiga	P Van Der Valk/Discovery
BAAL: main theme	Amiga	Ray Norrish/Psygnosis
R-TYPE: loading theme	Amiga	Chris Huelsbeck/E Dreams
DATASTORM: main theme	Amiga	Tim Engels/Visionary Design Technologies.

A.Jeffs, Braunton

Any more music charts out there...or graphics charts, or gameplay charts...??

sticks really is the only way to fly. And it's the only way you're going to get this customer to climb into any new-fangled cockpits.

M.G.Eustace, Cookridge

UNHAPPY

I would like to write a game in machine code but I have come across a problem. I asked my cousin who is a programmer to a large company to give me some assistance. He answered "Sorry I can't help you - I don't know how to do it", so I go to my other cousin who is a programming expert for another company - same reply. Next I go to a friend who has a list of qualifications relating to computing, I ask him for help, again I get the same answer as before.

Funnily enough, though, all of these people have said to me that games programming is far too simple and unrewarding - if this is the case how is it none of them could help me?

As I live in Birmingham (which

is the worst city to become interested in games programming) I have no way of getting any help with my problem therefore I must forfeit my project.

Nigel Smith, Birmingham

We have two suggestions.
(1) Change your address;
(2) Change your toothpaste.

DESPERATE

Software houses must be under the impression that they can treat the buyer with absolute contempt. They keep us waiting for months on end for their product, they do not reply to any queries, and they never supply any helpful hints about their games. It annoys me to see page after page of tips and pokes from readers when in fact, these should be supplied by the software house.

I have an absolute string of A and O levels but I also have a string of games which defied completion. No help from the software house however, no help from

the instruction book and no help when asked for.

I don't think I can stand much more of it. An Amstrad, a Commodore and an Amiga could be for sale very shortly.

Robert Lamb, Cottingham

PRIZE QUESTION

I am writing to ask why you have not yet printed the results of a couple of recent competitions, ie, Cinemaware/PC, Radio Ace competitions. I am aware of the recent take-over by EMAP but please could you print the results soon?

When you were running the Ace card competition you said you would do something similar in the future so when do you think you will do it?

I think that when you print screenshots on any game you should also print what graphic versions they are. Please could you bring back Ace On The Road.

Edwin Birch, Dallington

All the prize winners are named in this issue – check the Pink Pages for details. ACE On The Road will continue to appear on an irregular basis, whenever we visit someone interesting enough to write about! Stand by for reports from more British software houses, as well as America and Japan. As for the ACE Card, we will be replacing this with a new competition, to be run monthly. It's called the Final Verdict, and you can find out more about it on page 132 – The Final Verdict starts next month – don't miss it!

AN APPLE A DAY...

As an Apple II owner (more specifically the IIgs) I find it disappointing that magazines in the UK more often than not simply ignore the computer's existence. There are over 550 Apple II games currently available (many of which have been reviewed in ACE), with over 100 Apple IIgs specific entertainment programs including the popular *War in Middle Earth* and *Dungeon Master*. Your lack of reference to these computers when compiling a Release Box is surprising.

The Apple II has been around in various forms since the late 70's, and despite Apple UK's apparent lack of interest, the IIgs, introduced in 1986, is still available from authorised dealers. The 65816 based 16-bit IIgs is a capable computer. Features include 4096 colours, 640x200 resolution RGB output, standard Apple Desktop Interface (Mac style WIMPs), 8MB internal RAM expansion, 1Mb ROM expansion, 7 expansion slots, and peripherals (keyboard, disk drives, midi etc.) freely interchangeable with those from the Mac.

As for music/sound (with reference to your MUSIC series) the IIgs has a built in Ensoniq "Digital Oscillator Chip" (as used in the Mirage Music Synthesizer) with 30 paired oscillators producing 15 sound channels. An Analogue-Digital converter is also available on the Ensoniq device, not to mention 64K of dedicated sound RAM. Surely qualities worthy of mention in your Music articles (please note M. Bates).

The IIgs may not be as popular in the UK as in the United States, but a home computer with these features should not be ignored (or forgotten) by a magazine dedicated to Advanced Computer Entertainment.

Dr. K. Kishimoto, Withington

CONSOLES MATTER

When I opened Ace Issue 24 I was overjoyed to read a letter from a fellow Sega user (Thanks Oliver)

Saga's are underated by the Amiga and ST users because they think they are cheap and nasty. But people like me have spent £100s on our segas, buying games like Altered Beast, and Shinobi, which Amiga and ST users can't get yet (like Olly said). Score now:

Sega 1 Amiga ST's etc 0

But there is a problem for us Sega owners, and that is that the games cost between £15 and to around £45. And the Amiga and ST games differ more.

Sega 1 Amiga ST's 1

Heres another one for the Sega: the actual consoles/computer costs about 1/5 of the Amiga and 1/4 of the ST.

Sega 2 Amiga 1

But here's a few more points for the Amiga and ST's. They are 16 Bit and they have got better sound and graphics:

Final Score Sega 2 Amiga ST's 3

So who cares? we love our Segas.

Chris Blowers, Enfield

If only the whole subject was as simple as football, we could all tot up the scores, make our buying decisions, and live happily ever after. But in reality it isn't like that at all. Consoles offer none of the computing applications versatility of computers, but on the other hand the new range of consoles (Konix, Engine, 16-bit Sega) are likely to make most current home micros look a little wobbly on the arcade front. There's only one realistic decision: get both a computer AND a console!

I am thinking of buying a console. First I thought about buying a good old Sega Master System then thought I'd wait around for the Sega Megadrive because I wanted a 16 bit, but I didn't want an Amiga or an ST because all I do is play games on it, but what I'd like to know is:

1. When will the Sega Megadrive be launched officially in Britain and how much will it cost?
2. How much will Sega Megadrive games cost when officially launched over here? no idea
3. I heard that there was a special converter for the Megadrive which enabled you to play old Sega games on the megadrive is this true and if so does this mean that when played on the megadrive they have 16 bit graphics and sound.
4. Will old Sega games like *Outrun* and *Afterburner* be available on the Megadrive.
5. What is all this PAL and SCART that keeps popping up in adverts for the PC Engine and Sega Megadrive.

Stephen O'Brien, London

There is no official launch date yet, but distributors Virgin reckon it will be in the 'first quarter' next year, but probably not before March. This would seem to indicate around May 1990. The price of the games has yet to be fixed but the hope is that they will not be more than current Sega titles. The converter does exist, at least so Virgin tell us, but no-one in the UK has yet seen a sample. The 8-bit games will run in their 8-bit versions and big sellers like *OutRun* and *Afterburner* may well be converted to Megadrive versions.

Finally, PAL and SCART refer to video data standards and compatibility. A PAL output will drive any UK colour TV, whereas SCART outputs to monitors, although some UK TV's also have a SCART adaptor. You should beware of buying 'grey imported' versions of the Megadrive or the PC Engine since the quality of video output cannot always be guaranteed.

ACE is currently reviewing its policy on other machine formats. See next month's issue for the result. We think you'll be pleased...

GLOWING TRIBUTE TO RISING SUN

I feel I must complain about your review of *Lords of the Rising Sun* in the June issue.

I have played the game for weeks and at one time for 8 hours, and the following day 7 hours. I lost. But I was completely held by this great game. What other game can keep your interest for 8 hours?!! And you still want to play it afterwards...

I say well done to Cine-

ware, who always produce fantastic Amiga software – The Only Ones who produce software always worth buying.

S. Hayward, Bournemouth

How much did they pay you?!

8-BIT BEANO

I'm not going to talk about software piracy, ST vs Amiga, Censorship etc...

What if it told you that on November 26th the '8 Bit Micro Show' is to be held in Tamworth. Yes, that's right. No 16 bit machines allowed. The following can attend:

C64, c16/+4, MSX, CPC, Spectrum, BBC/Electron etc...

Entrance is 75p per person

which includes freebies, a free draw to win an Atari 65XER, and don't forget all those stands with bargain priced games, joysticks, new software up and running, etc. Maps are available with bookings to the address below:

D. Betts, 8, Healey, Lakeside, Tamworth, Staffs, B77 2RF.

BBS BABY

I have started a new BBS running on a 1040 ST specifically aimed at the ST. I would appreciate it if any Modem users out there would log on and leave some feedback mail about discussion areas they would like to see, help lines they think may be useful etc.

The name of the BBS is the Tavern, it runs on V21/23 modes,

CRACKED?

I live in Holland and, as you may or may not know, almost every computer hobbyist in my country gets all his (cracked) software for free. When I bought my first computer (C-64) I thought this was a normal situation, but as I began to read English magazines I discovered that the foreign attitude towards this behaviour was completely different. Listen to this anecdote.

A friend of mine who also owned a C-64 at that time, went on holiday to his English cousin. He brought his computer with him (including about 2000 cracked software titles). His cousin, who was a C-64 owner also, was very pleased to see this enormous amount of software. My friend offered to copy all the software he wanted. Now his cousin was even more happy – until he discovered that everything was cracked. From that point he didn't even want to play the games anymore. And the disks that already contained some copied stuff? Guess what he did with them. Yes, he cleared them all!

I don't know what you think of this cousin's behaviour, but we Dutch people find it (a bit) weird. I really do not know anybody in Holland (and I'm really not only talking about friends, but computer owners from all over the country) who would act like he did.

Sometimes I really feel pity for all those gamers who can only buy about two or three titles a month with pain in their wallets. You see, nowadays I own an Amiga 500, and I'm undeniably happy with it (I'm a computer science student) but I ask myself if I would have purchased it if I wasn't able to get all my software for free (and so think my teachers – believe me everybody in Holland does). Between the lines, did you know that three of my friends bought an Amiga 500 just because they were allowed to copy my software (for free of course)?

Perhaps you already know, but let me tell you this. I possess almost 200 of the latest software titles. (that means all big hits that you review in your mag.). I guess you are not very pleased to hear that, but that's just the way things are in Holland. You know that people consider me crazy if I go to the store and purchase some software? (Unless it's stuff with a lot of documentation).

Eddy Borremans, Holland

Unfortunately Holland isn't the only country to take this attitude to piracy. The same situation exists in many other European countries, with Greece and Italy being historically inclined to software piracy (though the situation is improving). And as regular ACE readers will know, we've already reported on the piracy situation in Denmark. These countries all have one thing in common: they pirate imported software. Ultimately it's British and American companies who lose the money and not Danish, Italian, or Dutch ones. Perhaps that has something to do with it... There is also the question of price, with games costing more (sometimes far more) in different territories, but after 1992 the price problem should come to an end. Whether the habits will come to an end as well seems less likely.

As a dedicated games player, I have become so disgruntled with the state of current software that I feel I must let my views be aired.

Having been on the games "scene" since those early "Binatone TV Games" were around, I have played many games for many hours. However, recently, games do not seem to be holding my attention for more than a few hours. As you will have noticed there is no address on this letter, this is because I am a so-called "pirate" of games. After three years of owning my ST, I am totally fed up with the trash that appears. I mean, the games on the ST are so bad that I now play on my old Atari 8-bit more than the ST - which is hardly a good advertisement for new technology. I shall remain a pirate until the software house buck their ideas up and release games which live up to their Megahype, and drop their prices. Games should be "playable"; Kick Off proves that gameplay can be a substitute for Megabytes of graphics, and games should be based on gameplay, not graphics and sound, and these two should only be souped up after the gameplay cannot be improved anymore.

The 8-bit prophet

and uses 8-n-1 format. The number is 01-881 9799 and is available from 9pm to 6am Mondays to Saturdays.

Paul Baker, Wood Green, London

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

Whatever happened to Superior's Conqueror, which was being converted to the Amiga and ST from the Archimedes in June '88?!

Also what happened to Linel's Dragonslayer, which was advertised to be released for the Amiga in January 1989?!

A.Jeffs, Braintree

Dragonslayer has been 'delayed' but is on its way. As for Conqueror... we were unable to contact Superior at the time going to press, but we'll keep you informed.

ARCHIE BARGIE

I've found a company who are producing a whole range of software for the Archie, including games resembling *OutRun* and *After-Burner*. The company is named Cambridge International Software, tel. 01-278 6622. The company plans about 25 products by December. These also include conversions of *Dungeon Master* and other popular games. This software will surely help bring the Archie into the limelight. Lastly, thanks for a super mag – the Archie seems to be creeping slowly into ACE more and more frequently...

K. Pardesi, London

Other machine owners can take comfort from the fact that all titles will be converted for most popular formats.

AMIGA MYSTERY

After playing Xybots, I powered off my Amiga for 35 seconds as normal. Switching it back on again I was met with a dull grey screen and that was it...

Can you help? My Amiga won't work properly, refusing information from disks and sometimes never coming on at all!

Wiz (no address supplied)

PS I wrote to you because you're the only intelligent mag around.

As the only intelligent mag around, we have decided, after lengthy discussion, that your computer is possibly...broken.

We believe that the solution may be to...er...get it mended. Er...Um...Contact your dealer, or someone...

ACE PRINTER

After playing *Populous* on my Amiga 1000 times I gladly send you all the codes for all the levels. I have printed them out on my colour printer and stuck them on a card especially for you.

Zafar Bhatti, Hounslow

We were very impressed by the print out, Zafar. We were even more impressed by the printer's apparent ability to print out – on the reverse side of the paper – a page from another magazine.

VIOLENCE

I have recently discovered that if a game really annoys you then a simple solution is to take it out of the disk drive and make some weirdo growling noises at it. If doing this seems pretentious to you then you are probably a bit of a smarmy person. If anyone out there in stupid land thinks I'm daft, then they should come and see me so I can (a) punch their stupid faces and (b) give them a good stiff kick up the rear.

Jimbo Corleone, Coventry

The weirdo growling noises make perfect sense to us, though we find that short, sharp yapping sounds work better. However, our psychiatrist was disturbed by the level of violence implicit in the latter half of your letter. Seek assistance.

KICK OFF

After the success of Kick Off on ST, Amiga, and C64 (and the Spectrum version currently being released), we've decided to take the plunge and produce Kick Off 2.

We thought it would set a nice precedent, however, if – instead of simply going ahead and producing the game to our own specifications – we asked current players of Kick Off to send us their suggestions for features that could be included in the new game.

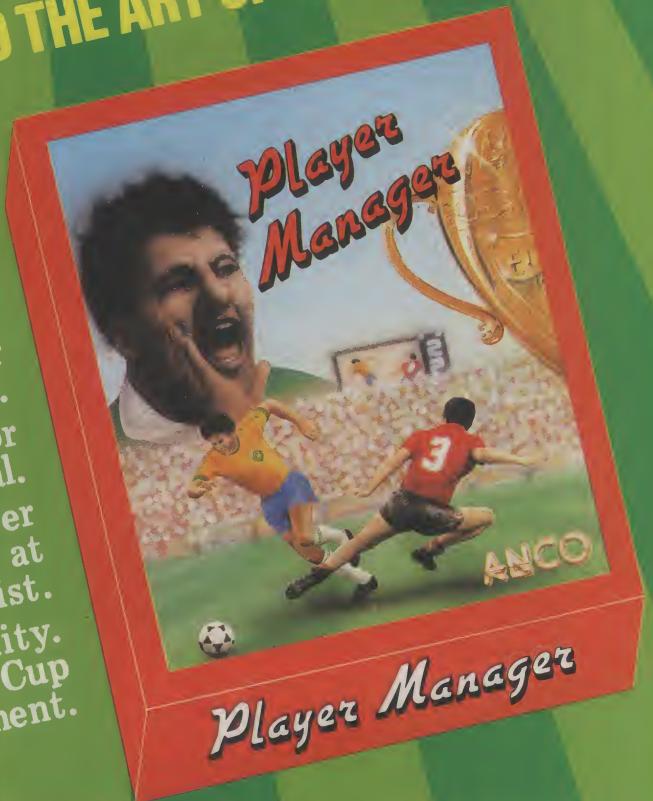
If you've played Kick Off and have some ideas for gameplay or presentation that you'd like to see included in the new game, drop us a line at Anco, Unit 10, Burnham Trading Estate, Lawson Road, Dartford, Kent, DA1 5BH.

Anil Gupta, Anco Software Ltd

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Bring Back The Glory Days. That's the brief of the newly appointed PLAYER MANAGER, an international class player, as he takes charge of a third division club. His success depends on four distinct aspects of the game.

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This part of the game is a refined version of the KICK OFF, retaining it's pace, flavour and the universally acclaimed game play. Play in your position or control the nearest player. The first option combined with a tailor made tactics can play havoc in the opposition goal mouth.

MANAGERIAL SKILLS

Devising winning tactics, acquiring players with right skills from the Transfer market and selecting a team with the right balance is the test of the Managerial skills. He must aim to get promotion as quickly as possible while he can still influence the results as a player and before the age starts to effect his pace and stamina. When to hang his boots up is the toughest decision he has to make.

TACTICS

Four well proven tactics are provided to suit most situations but you can design your own tactics. The pitch is divided in blocks. Place the ball in a block and move the players to the required position. Repeat the process for each block. See the tactics in action using the Ray Trace facility.

THE PLAYERS

Over a thousand players in the four division league. Each player with a unique combination of the following attributes: SHOOTING ACCURACY, PASSING ACCURACY, PACE, STAMINA, APPLICATION, AGGRESSION, HEIGHT and TACKLING SKILL. These attributes are influenced by the player's Age, Mental and Physical Dexterity, Quality of Experience, Weight, Temperament and Morale. There are several other factors such as injury, disciplinary points, unsuitable playing position which influence a player's performance.

Hosts of other factors like referees, injuries, disciplinary problems, team morale etc. can lay to waste the best laid plans of a manager. The PLAYER MANAGER brings everyday realities of a Manager's life, his talents as a manager and a player into a sharp FOCUS. THE FOCUS IS ON YOU.

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COMING SOON...

OLD GROPER GETS HIS GRUBBY MITTS ON MORE GOODIES...

Old Groper's back with another sackful of autumnal goodies, ready to sort out the hots shots from the lame shots. Here's his report on the latest offerings for your favourite machines, and as he's in a generous mood there are a couple of snazzy screenshots for you to drool over. Enjoy...

US Gold have been very busy recently grabbing stars from the big screen and putting them onto your monitor. If you thought the hype surrounding the latest Indiana Jones game was a bit overdone then you ain't seen nothing yet. US Gold's describe their latest personality scoop as having the biggest selling album of all time, winning 8 grammys, 7 American Music awards, 4 American Video awards, and the BPI award for best international artist.

No, it's not Roland Rat, it's none other than big, bad Wacko Jacko. Before you get too excited, the game has nothing whatsoever to do with oxygen tents, pet chimpanzees, or bad nose jobs. Instead it is based on Michael Jackson's first film, Moonwalker. If you haven't seen the film then you'll probably want to know that the story involves the rescue



Top: Our hero (that's him in the leather gear) homes in on the key to success in *Moonwalker* the game, coming soon from US Gold.

Left: Shimmying out of a spot of bother. Michael struts his stuff in the original *Moonwalker* film.

of Michael's good friends from the diabolical Mr. Big.

With the passing of a shooting star Michael gains 'amazing powers of transformation' (much cheaper than using a plastic surgeon)! Michael uses his powers to defeat the evil Mr. Big and his henchmen and rescue his friends,

also managing to find time for the odd song or two! US Gold tell us that the rescue of Michael's kidnapped friends combined with the astonishing transformation, battle and chase sequences make *Moonwalker* an ideal title for conversion into a home computer game. *Moonwalker* can be expected on all formats in Mid-November. Hmm... should be fun. Gropey awaits the results with interest.

The chappies and chappesses down at USG are also making good use of their TSR licence. Over one year after its launch on the C64 and PC, the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game, *Pool of Radiance* is to be released for the ST, Amiga, and Mac. USG are convinced that the new releases will

take worldwide sales of the game through the quarter million barrier. Well done US Gold, that's two achievements with one product. The biggest selling Computer RPG, with the longest release schedule! The *Pool of Radiance* (due in October) release is to be closely followed by *Hillsfar* (November). Fortunately AD&D fans will not have to wait as long for the next game in the series, *Dragons of Flame*. This game, set in the Dragonlance Universe, gives you the chance to take part in the quest of the 'Companions of the Lance' as they

ADVENTURE FOR MANIACS

Fresh from Lucasfilm Games, who recently brought us *Indy The Graphic Adventure*, is a rather more macabre romp involving the evil Dr. Fred. Unlike conventional adventure games *Maniac Mansion* is completely mouse driven, so there is no tedious typing. There are seven different characters for the player to control, each with their own distinctive talents and personalities. Lucasfilm promise that the game will be equally appealing to both seasoned adventurers and novices. Since it is spread over 50 rooms containing 450 different objects it should certainly keep even the quickest adventurer happy. US Gold are distributing the 16-bit versions of the game, which will be available in late September. Also due soon from Lucasfilm is *Battle of Britain*, the game which seeks to recreate the RAF's finest hour. It should be available in November.



Could she be the next victim in *Maniac Mansion*?



Battle of Britain from US Gold.



A *Dragons of Flame* adventurer discovers there's a sting in this tale!

continue their fight to save Krynn from domination by Takhisis, the Queen of Darkness. *Dragons of Flame* will be out late October for 16-bit machines, while 8-bit owners can expect to see it late November.

FIVE TO DRIVE

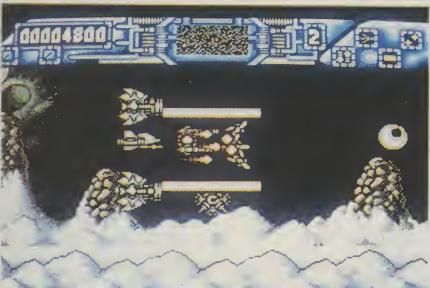
Due out in November for the Amiga (with an ST version to follow six weeks on) is *Drivin' Force*, the latest game from Digital Magic Software. No ordinary driving game this: it provides you with no less than 5 different vehicles to race. These are a truck, a Formula one car, a bike, a



The **Drivin' Force** of software? Digital Magic Software get inside the game!

common or garden car, and a buggy. There is even a jet-ski bonus level! Amiga owners will be pleased to learn that the game has been developed on that machine. DMS tell us that this results in better versions for both the Amiga and the ST. The game will retail for £24.95 on the Amiga and £19.95 on the ST. Above is a nice piccy of the driving force behind Drivin' Force, although I'm sure you would much rather look at the game instead.

BITS 'N' PIECES

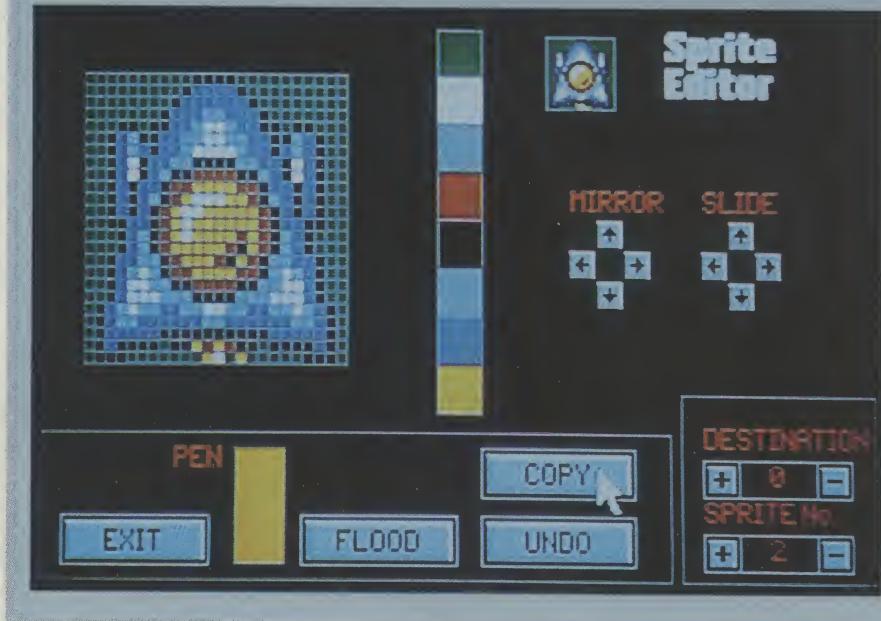


Darius from **The Edge**. It sure ain't as cute as **Garfield**, which should please arcade shoot em up addicts.

OUTLAW SHOOTS 'EM UP

Outlaw Productions Shoot-em-up Construction Kit is coming for the ST soon. This STOS basher is already out for the Amiga and C64. It allows the construction of stand alone shoot-em-ups which can be freely distributed

to friends (or software houses, although don't expect to see too many SEUCK products in the top ten!). SEUCK should be available in October/November priced £29.99



Virgin Mastertronic continues its support of the Sega system with the release of two more games, Casino Games (£24.95, November), and Wanted (£19.95, December). Also due soon from Virgin is Double Dragon II, due on November 11th for the PC (£24.95), ST and Amiga (£19.99), Spectrum +3, C64 disk, and CPC 6128 (£14.99), and Spectrum, C64, and CPC 464 (£9.99)

The Edge are currently hard at work on Peanuts featuring lovable old Snoopy and the conversion of the arcade sensation Darius. The latter features the largest sprites ever seen in a computer game. In fact some of them are so large they won't fit on the screen! Make of that what you will. Both programs will be shown at the PC Show. Speaking of which... see you all there!

ACTIVISION IN POLE POSITION?

Anyone who frequents arcades can not have failed to come across Sega's superb game Power Drift. For the benefit of those that haven't, it is a fast 3D racing game that knocks spots off Out Run. Old Groper certainly doesn't envy Activision the task of converting it though. The task has been assigned to veteran programmer ZZKJ, who was previously responsible for the Super Hang On. Power Drift should be out on all major formats in time to grace a few Christmas stockings.



Revving up for the start of a mean race in **Power Drift**, due soon from Activision.



Being driven round the bend by **Power Drift**, Activision's forthcoming conversion of the excellent arcade machine from Sega. No hydraulics though... sorry!

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PLUG 'EM IN...

PLUG IN PCB EXTENSIONS - AND PLUG 'EM IN VIOLENCE FIGHT...

Last month we talked about the cost of silicon in general and how Sega had invented its System 24 to try and rationalise things - keeping the same hardware in the box and only changing the software. Capcom, another major Japanese based company, have tried a slightly different tack with their advanced CP System Board.

Apart from being a very highly spaced out board, the CP system approaches the problem of obsolescence from another viewpoint, being a halfway house between completely soft on one hand (like System 24, with disk loading) and being completely hard-wired, like a conventional PCB.

Although the whole of the system is hard-wired, it is made up of interlocking motherboards - so if you wanted to change the output game of a board, in theory you would just replace the necessary sections, rather than having to invest in a completely new board.

This is particularly useful for Capcom, as CP Boards are not cheap - hardly surprising as the company threw millions of dollars and a lot

of time into the whole project.

Like many of the newer high-end boards, the CP has got 2 68000's chugging away inside, but the real mystery of the thing is two custom-designed, very highly integrated chips, that make it really fly. Capcom is, understandably, reluctant to reveal more.

Games on the system so far however, see below, are all technologically outstanding in their own ways, but other than *Strider* have shown little originality of gameplay. But it's only a matter of time before the Capcom technicians come up with something that makes the new system really shine - and that'd be guaranteed to blow away almost anything any other board could deliver at present.



Here's a list of current games that use the CP System Board. If you spot a cabinet running one of these in your local arcade, keep an eye on it - sooner or later another game is liable to spring up on the system, and chances are that Capcom will be developing some particularly strong titles for it.

Forgotten Worlds - Graphic tour de force, but a non-standard control system limited its appeal to arcade operators and so its overall numbers in the field.

Dynasty Wars - The subject matter (oriental heroes scything through armies of cannon fodder) is a little to alien to Westerners, but the game itself has some nice, if unspectacular, touches.

Strider - Most innovative of the CP games, with artificial gravity fields injecting much needed novelty into this combat jumpy-jumpy.

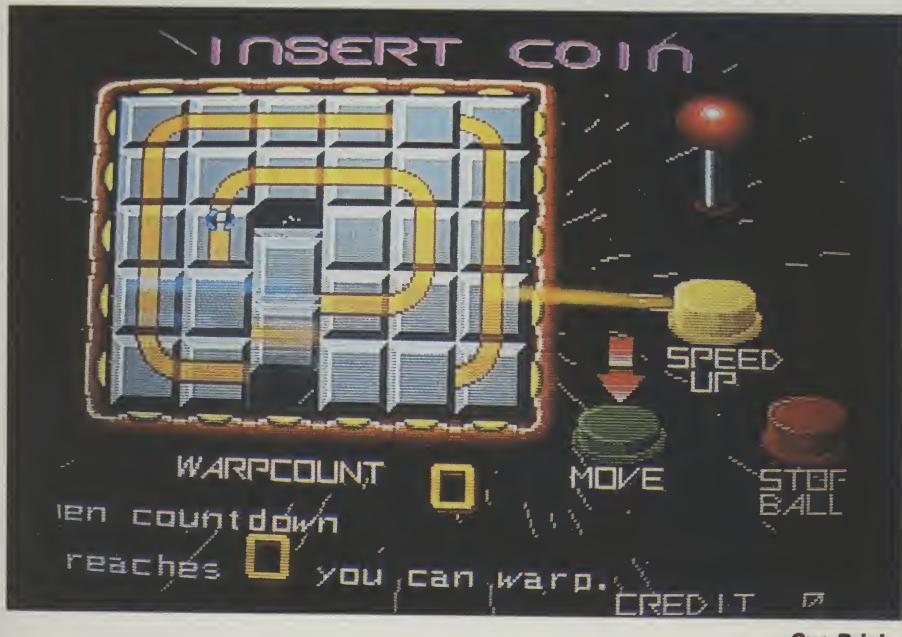
Willow - Licensed from the movie and no relation to the little known Mindscape home format product. Another combat jumpy-jumpy with high graphic content.

U.N. Squadron - latest release on the system, a left-right scrolling shooter, in the mould of *Silkworm*. Overtly superficial gameplay - but I bet it's got some depth in there somewhere. Choice of three start planes (Jap, Yank and...Danish!).

▲
A CP System board - bursting with memory, 68000's, and mysterious custom chips.

▲*Ghouls'n'Ghosts* - Follow up to the smash hit *Ghosts n' Goblins*, itself a mega hit both on home formats by Elite and in the arcades. The sequel has lovely graphics but shows little enhancement to the original gameplay.





CUE BRICK

Confused? I was. Incentive bought out a tile variant game on home format about 3 years ago and now a similar thing has turned up on coin-op from Konami.

Cue Brick's another attempt by the coin-op business to come up with a successor to Tetris – still reportedly going strong in the arcades of Asia. It's well implemented and a pleasant change for the "disengage frontal lobes" jobs, but it's not intuitive enough to make the same impact as Tetris.



Violence Fight

VIOLENCE FIGHT

What else can they do to beat-em-ups? Make the sprites even bigger, that's what. Current award for huge sprites goes to Taito's Violence Fight – which also boasts a complex array of moves, choice of character at the

start of the game and painfully realistic punching sounds. Combine this with the "punch it" control system that was experimentally used on Street Fighter – and the experience would almost be like going to an England match.

When the punchy version of Street Fighter first appeared in Japan, there were stories of elderly gentlemen expiring with heart failure as the aggressive instincts of a lifetime suddenly poured out and were unleashed upon the innocent machine. You have been warned...

OMEGA FIGHTER

There will always be games around like Omega Fighter – from minor league UPL. Vertical scroll, auto fire and billions of sprites – take me to the funny farm, Daddy.

Auto fire on with lasers, auto off with higher brain functions, you soft focus just in front of the screen so you can take the whole of the area in at one time and get on with the processing required to plot the likely path of enemy sprites and bullets, taking the appropriate evasive action.

Total synthesis with the machine – the vid junkies' Nirvana, I like this one!

Omega Fighter



GAWP AT AWPS

Like any other area of hi-tec, vids have their own trade jargon that can seem very confusing to the outsider. Is that game you're playing JAMMA compatible? Is it a PCB? From now on, we'll run a regular column letting you in on some of the trade terms and secrets... This month – how to tell your AWP's from your SWP's.

AWP – Stands for Amusement with Prizes. And what sort of machine would that be? Well, believe it or not, we are talking about the good old one armed bandit – the fruit. But the name – Amusement with Prizes? Well, it's called Amusement with Prizes because it's for amusement only. In other words – it's rigged. All perfectly up front of course – but inside even the most primitive looking of AWP's is a fairly sophisticated micro that ensures that the machine keeps a precise percentage overall of everything it takes in, that percentage being set (in the UK) by the government.

Play 'em one evening and you might come out on top, play 'em every evening of your life and you may be amused but you'll certainly be out of pocket.

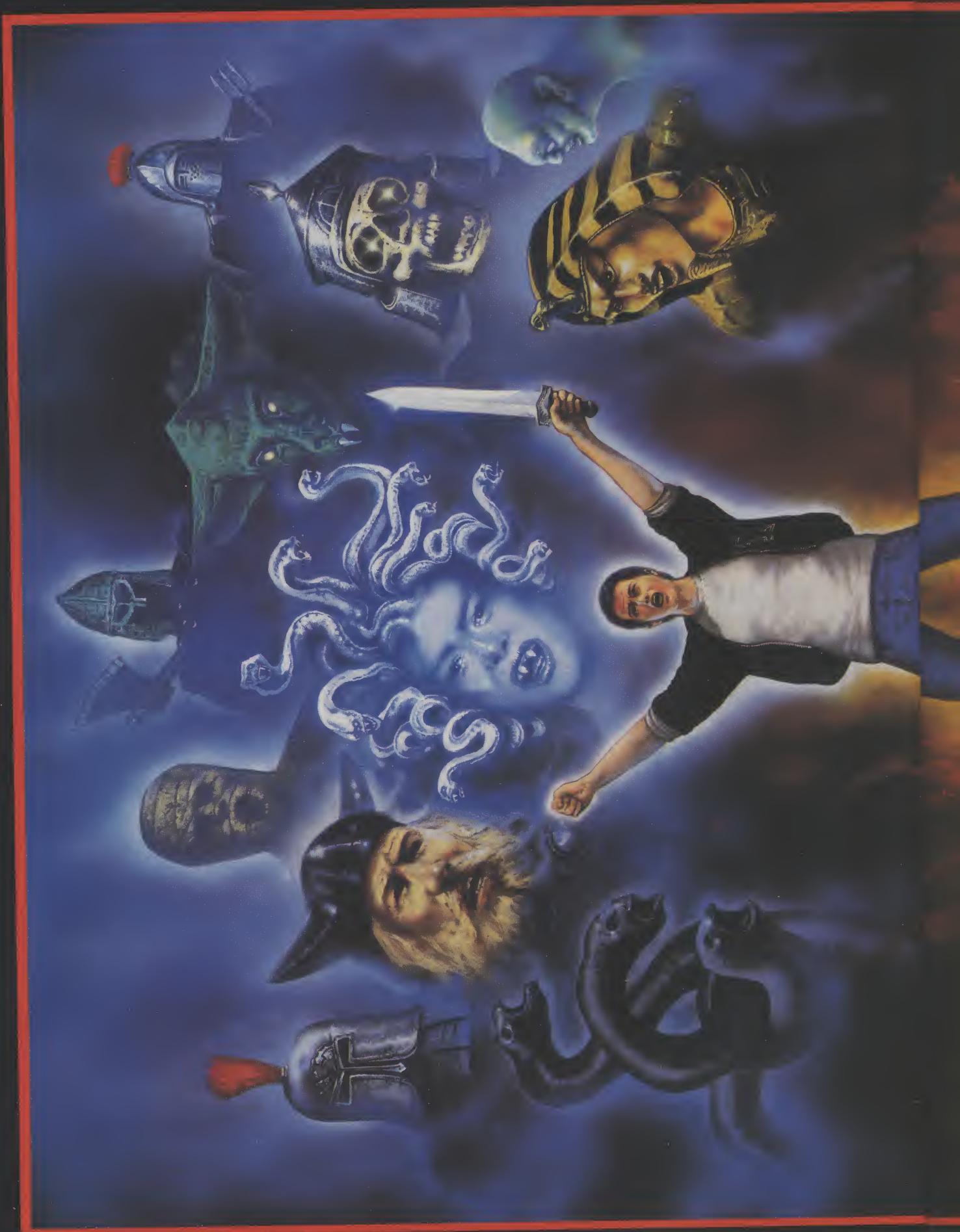
One funny thing about us UK AWP-freaks. Fruits can quite easily be programmed to work on a normal TV screen – and many are in the US; in the UK, however, video fruit machines are not popular. It seems that UK punters think that as long as there are mechanical bits inside the AWP's there's a chance they can beat the odds... SUCKERS!!!!

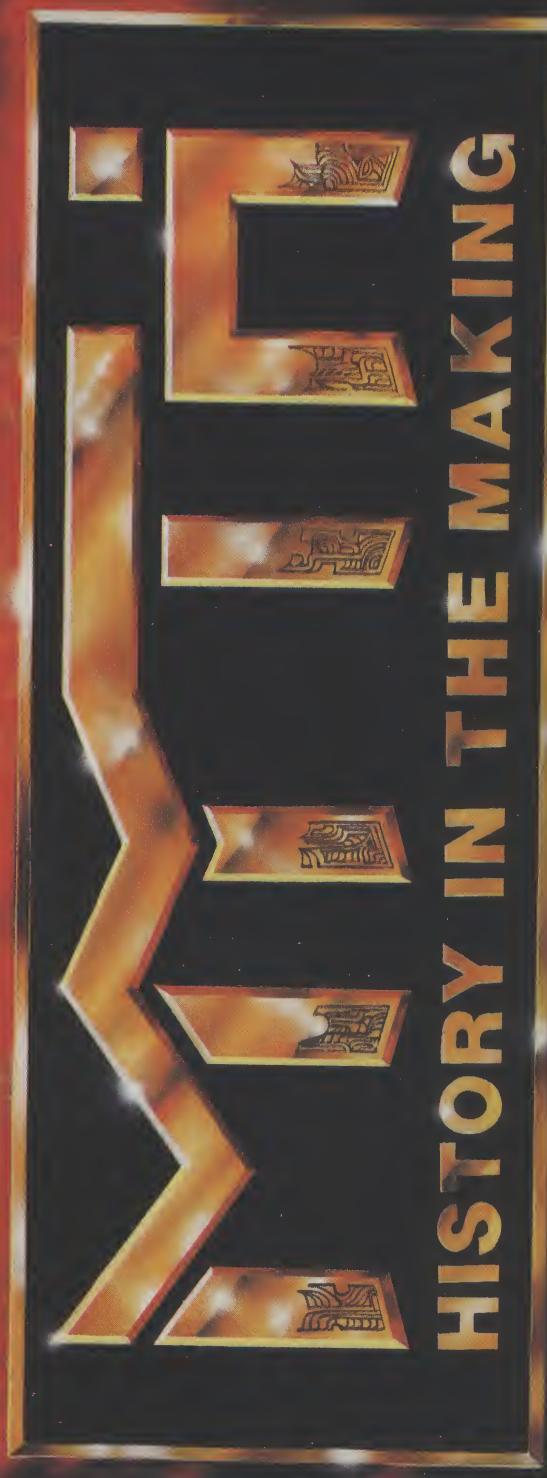
SWF – now this is more up my street – Skill with Prizes – that category of machine being presently dominated by Trivia SWP's of various types. Put your money in and – assuming that you have a brain the size of a planet – you can walk away with a tenner. And because it's all skill, the operator doesn't need a gaming licence to run it – neat, eh?

Neat, because if the programming and design of the machine is sophisticated enough you can make sure that, although it's theoretically possible to get serious dosh out of the game, you'd have to be a clairvoyant with the reactions of Bruce Lee to do it!

One particular non-trivia SWP that's hit recently is a hi-tec version of the old card sharp's trick – Find the Lady. Four electronic 'cards' are laid out before you and flipped over very quickly. When they stop you have to select which one was the last to be turned over.

Theoretically this is a skill-based game, but when the flipping gets to be sufficiently fast, the game becomes a straight-forward turkey shoot. This is because 'vision persistence' (the tendency of the eye – which makes image animation possible – to retain an image for 1/10th second) starts to set in and for most mortals it is simply not possible to tell which card was flipped when. Nice idea – and no gaming licence needed here, your honour.





Actual C.64 Screenshots



S Y S T E M 3

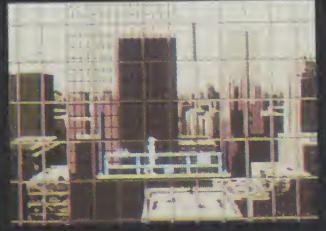
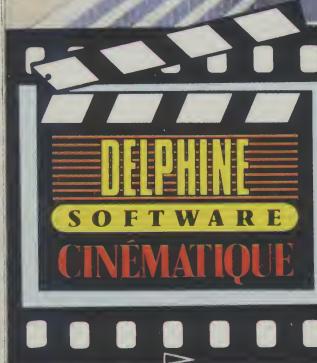
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THE SECRET'S OUT!



NEC's blockbuster PC Engine has been re-engineered by a British company to produce a fully-operational UK version. Classic arcade action is now only £199 pounds away!

The PC Engine has been driving up the adrenalin levels of committed gamesplayers for almost two years. Now, at last, you can get your mits on a neat little UK conversion that really delivers the goods.

News of the Engine didn't filter through to Britain from Japan until just over a year ago, and since then there have been a number of unauthorised imports of varying degrees of quality. People have snapped them up, however – the system's tech specs were pretty impressive when the machine appeared, although the unit faces tough opposition from the Sega Megadrive (due here next Easter) and the yet-to-appear Konix, both of which are technically superior.

However, it's the games that have got the boys clamouring for Engines. For some reason, the NEC machine has generated some superb titles – probably something to do with its success in Japan – and the range of software, combined with the technical excellence of the games, makes the machine a very attractive proposition.

But there's a problem. The only Engines on sale in this country have been Japanese imports. These machines expect not only a different power supply, but also a different (NTSC) TV system to output through. Dealers have got round this problem by adding on various dongles that convert the UK mains voltage to the required levels and output a proper PAL TV signal...



'We are desperate to promote the PC Engine the way it should be...as a fully-functional equivalent of NEC's block-busting Japanese version. If NEC were to do it themselves, we'd be delighted to support it, but in the meantime the PC Engine Plus has to be the only alternative for the UK games enthusiast.'

James Dexter

doesn't have the official blessing of NEC, the Plus gives you everything you'd expect from an authorised UK Engine. Mention have, aided by Warwick Electronics' Mike Phillips, provided a quality power supply and – most importantly – re-engineered the TV output and made alterations to the case that ensure the Engine blasts away to its full potential. The result is a neat little unit that will accept all the official peripherals (many other UK versions can't, because you have to plug in a PAL booster) and – most importantly – delivers a needle sharp display. And it costs £199.99, cheaper than many less impressive offerings...

ARCADE MANIA

James Dexter of Mention Technical Services is nothing if not an arcade freak. Hot on the heels

At least, that's what the dongles are meant to do. The trouble is that all too often they are of inferior quality and degrade the performance of the machine. The resulting problems all hit the machine right where it hurts: on the gamesplaying front (see the Engine Trouble panel on this page).

Enter Mention and Active Sales & Marketing. James Dexter of Mention reckoned the PC Engine deserved a better showing in the UK and together with Active's Robert Stallibrass they set about producing a machine that would give UK gamesplayers the true Engine experience. Importing units from Japan, they've re-engineered them and turned out something they call the PC Engine Plus.

Although it

As the console scene begins to hot up, the contention between the PC Engine and the Sega 16 bit Megadrive grows by the day. Although neither machine is officially available in this country there are a great deal of suppliers already selling both. Assuming that you've already decided to add a console to your collection, and that a Nintendo or a Konix is not for you, should you rev an Engine or drive a Megadrive?

The deciding factors have to be support and software. The Megadrive is likely to be launched officially by Virgin in this country around Easter 1990. Virgin have already given a good deal of support to the Sega Mastersystem and will doubtless continue the tradition with the Megadrive. You can expect a steady release of software and perhaps even a regular magazine to back up your purchase.

The NEC PC Engine is a more doubtful prospect on the support side. NEC themselves have still not decided whether to support the European market or not, and this long delay would seem to indicate that the company is more interested in Japan and the USA than in Europe. If this is the case, we can hardly expect much support from them even if they do officially release the product here. The same thing happened with the Nintendo, which – although 'officially' launched here some time ago has had a very chequered history and is only now getting anything like the support it needs.

The PC Engine Plus, although an excellent product, is still an 'unauthorised' import and the companies producing it are unlikely to be able to ship many units. In some respects this may help on the support side – you're more likely to get individual attention – but in the long term it means that the machine is unlikely to achieve the sales needed for widespread grass-roots support, dedicated magazines, and so on...

ENGINE TROUBLE

Typical problems experienced with unauthorised PC Engine's in the UK are generally caused by either an unreliable power supply or a poor quality modulator.

The basic system requires an input from the power supply of around 9 to 10 volts. However, many supplies tested by Mention were actually outputting as much as 12 or 13 volts. This isn't going to stop the machine from working, but it has a whole load of knock-on effects.

The first thing that happens is that the Engine's regulator, which receives this current and outputs it at a steady 5 volts, begins to overheat and drive out more current. This in turn affects the modulator, which itself begins to overheat and send more current to the display – and at this point you really begin to notice it. For example, the PC Engine can display 16 colours at once and change those colours very rapidly, giving the effect in a game of having a very large colour capability. This is often used on, say, large end-of-level aliens where the programmer might draw upon several different shades from the red area of the palette to produce a delicately shaded beastie.

Unfortunately, red just has to be one of the areas of the display spectrum most affected by current fluctuation, and instead of delicate shades, with an overheating modulator, all you're likely to get are smudgy pink, or smudgy red, or smudgy white. Not only that, but 'vision buzz' can set in, with the image quivering in sync with the soundtrack. Not very attractive. And then there are associated problems of a 'rolling' display, or other subtle scrolling effects that weren't exactly what the programmer intended.

Any PC Engine sold in the UK (since NEC have yet to produce a proper Euro-version) is going to have to tackle these problems. The PC Engine Plus has certainly succeeded better than most – and without any dongles. The quality of the display is excellent and the unit doesn't overheat. Definitely a good buy for Engine freaks and game enthusiasts alike..

SYSTEM SUPPORT

As the console scene begins to hot up, the contention between the PC Engine and the Sega 16 bit Megadrive grows by the day. Although neither machine is officially available in this country there are a great deal of suppliers already selling both. Assuming that you've already decided to add a console to your collection, and that a Nintendo or a Konix is not for you, should you rev an Engine or drive a Megadrive?

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of the PC Engine Plus will be an extraordinary beast called the Personal Arcade Plus. This little number (big number, actually) gives you a complete coin-op look-alike arcade machine in your own home – all you do is plug in your Sega, Nintendo, PC Engine, or Atari console and the inbuilt circuitry takes over, giving you a nice little blasting corner in the sitting room. Doubtless, the enterprising punters will fit their own coin slots and call the neighbours round.

Mention also distribute imported Sega Megadrives, claiming them to be the only models fully compatible with the Genesis software range and with future UK software (to be released when Virgin launch their version next year).

PC ENGINE VS MEGADRIVE

Gamepower is what it's all about, so, you'll probably ignore the question of support altogether (see panel opposite) and make your decision entirely on the basis of the sprite movements in *Alien Chain-Saw Champion*. A man (or a woman) after our own hearts...

The PC Engine already has an extensive software base, compared to the modest amount of titles available for the Megadrive, but is quality more important than quantity? Sega obviously don't think so – in fact they don't seem to think of the Engine as a great threat since they have allowed versions of some of their own titles to be released for it, a rare concession in the console world where the usual rule is 'my machine, my games, and everyone keep off'.

Sega's *Space Harrier* – the hugely successful 3D shoot-em-up – has been converted for a great many machines but the PC Engine version is closest to the arcade original. The scrolling is beautifully smooth and the speed of some levels is positively nerve racking. The graphics are almost identical to the coin op and all the levels are present.

The sound on *Space Harrier*, however, is quite poor compared to other titles on the Engine and although all the speech is there, none of it is intelligible! If you now look at the Megadrive, however, you'll find that Sega have chosen not to release *Space Harrier* at all, but instead have created *Space Harrier 2*.

The first game which shows what the Megadrive can do is *Ghouls and Ghosts*, a conversion of Capcom's arcade classic; the sequel to *Ghosts and Goblins*. Taking the role of Arthur the Knight, you run, jump and shoot your way through ten levels to kill Lucifer and rescue the princess. This is a perfect adaptation of the coin op, both graphically and audibly, the only difference being that you don't have to feed it your hard-earned cash. *Ghouls and Ghosts* is quite simply one of the best platform games available in the home.

The PC Engine may not be able to beat the Megadrive in the platform game stakes, but it does have the best shoot-em-up you can buy, in the shape of *Gunhead*. *Gunhead* is a vertical blast with the most awesome array of weapons



Space Harrier 2 follows in the same vein as the original as far as game play is concerned, but that is where the similarity ends. The graphics and speed would put the coin op original to shame. Even really huge sprites glide around the screen without slowing down, leaving nothing to detract from the hectic atmosphere induced while playing. The sound complements the quality of the game with some excellent tunes and the best digitised speech to date. Although *Space Harrier 2* is the most impressive game of its kind, it hardly stretches the Megadrive to its limits and as good as it may be, it is only likely to attract fans of the original.

You can't buy a Konix (yet), you want something beefier than a Nintendo, and you're a games connoisseur. In fact, you're a fussy, alien-bashing so-and-so.

Which games powerhouse should you go for?

seen in a game. There are nine extremely long levels, each containing guardians which must be defeated if you are to progress any further.

Although *Gunhead* is a touch on the easy side, it is never boring since the pace is always fast and furious. However, if the ease of play does not appeal it is also the only game I know of with a cheat mode that makes the game more difficult!



Ghouls and Ghosts on the Megadrive.

To declare one of these machines superior, would be difficult and misleading. The Megadrive is the more technically advanced, but the software and peripheral support is relatively poor. The PC Engine, on the other hand, has a large range of software available and peripherals which include the already popular CD ROM player.

Which of the two consoles to buy is a matter of preference and patience. If you are looking for a high quality range of top class software, you would have to opt for the established PC Engine. However, if you are willing to hold out for a few months until the Sega releases become more frequent and Virgin hopefully supports the machine, you may decide that it was well worth the wait.

Space Harrier on the PC Engine.

SOFTWARE FOR THE ENGINE: WAS IT WORTH THE WAIT?

At last a technically reliable PC Engine has appeared for the UK market. The technical superiority of the hardware is not worth anything, however, unless the software available for the machine comes up to scratch. Here we present an overview of a selection of the software currently available for the PC Engine in this country and address the question on most game players lips: 'Was it worth the wait?'

R-TYPE

R-Type began life as a hit arcade game from Irem Corporation. It was the first shoot-em-up to really make use of power-ups for the players craft. The add-ons available in the game are not merely gimmicks, but essential if you are to complete the game. The game is practically indistinguishable from the original. Great graphics, great sound, and plays like a dream.

The only problem with R-type is that it won't fit on one cartridge. Hudson Soft have put the game on two cartridges (three levels on each). Both cartridges are available separately, but you will have to pay twice as much if you want the whole game.

POWER LEAGUE II

This game is a simulation of Baseball featuring extremely nice 3D graphics. In terms of sheer attractiveness nothing on the ST or Amiga comes close except Cinemaware's TV Sports: Football. The appearance of this title is good news for prospective and existing PC Engine owners since it is an indication that the machine is attracting more than just conversions of arcade games.

LEGENDARY AXE

This is a fairly standard platform game, very similar in atmosphere to Elite's aging game, Beyond the Ice Palace. This was quite an early release for the PC Engine and has now been

superseded by much better software, unless you are a real platform addict I can't really recommend this one.

CYBER CROSS

This is another early release, but thankfully it is a lot more playable than Legendary Axe. This one is a martial arts type game set in the not too distant future. It is certainly nothing special. There have been many martial arts beat-em-ups appearing over recent years, and Cyber Cross doesn't really offer anything that you haven't seen before. Having said that, it is a reasonably competent effort.

PACLAND

The original Pacland arcade game from Namco is getting on a bit in years now, not to mention the Pac characters who inhabit it. Nevertheless it is still quite a good game, and should appeal to younger players as well as old timers. It is nice to see that a few old favourites are being launched for the Engine as well as the very latest releases. Let's hope even more are forthcoming.

GUNHED

As a vertically scrolling, collect the add-ons, shoot-em-up Gunhed holds no surprises. It's very fast, and very colourful, but other than that there's not really a lot here to hold the interest. There are already some far superior shoot-em-ups available for the Engine (witness R-Type), so it is difficult to see this having much appeal for Engine owners.

FINAL LAP

This is at first sight a three-dimensional racing game a la Pole Position but also seems to have



A typical end-of-level nasty in R-Type.

a quest of some sort involved. We didn't actually get to play all of this one because of a slight complication: None of us can read Japanese! Incidentally, this is one of the pitfalls of buying PC Engine software at present, although admittedly this was the first game that presented complications.

SIDEARMS

Sidearms is a conversion of an ancient but enjoyable sideways-scrolling shoot-em-up, which once again involves rearming yourself with more and more powerful weaponry. The action is certainly fast and very, very hard. But the game also has an addictive 'just one more time appeal'.

THE NINJA WARRIORS

A good conversion of a rather more recent martial-arts game from Taito. There is a slight twist to this one in that the ninja's in question are robots, and as you get damaged sections of gleaming metal are rather ominously revealed. It certainly warrants a look if you like combat games.

IN CONCLUSION

Looking at the titles currently available for the Engine the impression you are left with is that the good majority of games released are going to be arcade conversions. The Engine is, however, superbly suited to this type of game so at least what you get will be acceptably close to the originals.

Titles like Power League II and Final Lap are indications that there might be one or two games that break the mould, and Pacland is a good sign that there will be one or two golden oldies rearing their ancient heads.

Obviously because the Engine is not yet officially available for the UK, British owners are going to have to put up with software aimed at the Japanese Market. This means Japanese instruction booklets and Japanese on-screen messages in some games. Whether this situation will change in the near future remains to be seen. But you can rest assured that what is currently available for the Engine was definitely worth waiting for.



Pacman's looking pleased with himself in Pacland, but not for long...

WATCH YOUR SCREEN – SEPTEMBER

TM



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POWER DRIFT



IN POLE POSITION...

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GUESS WHO'S COMING TO



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TC GAVE THE WORLD AGAIN?

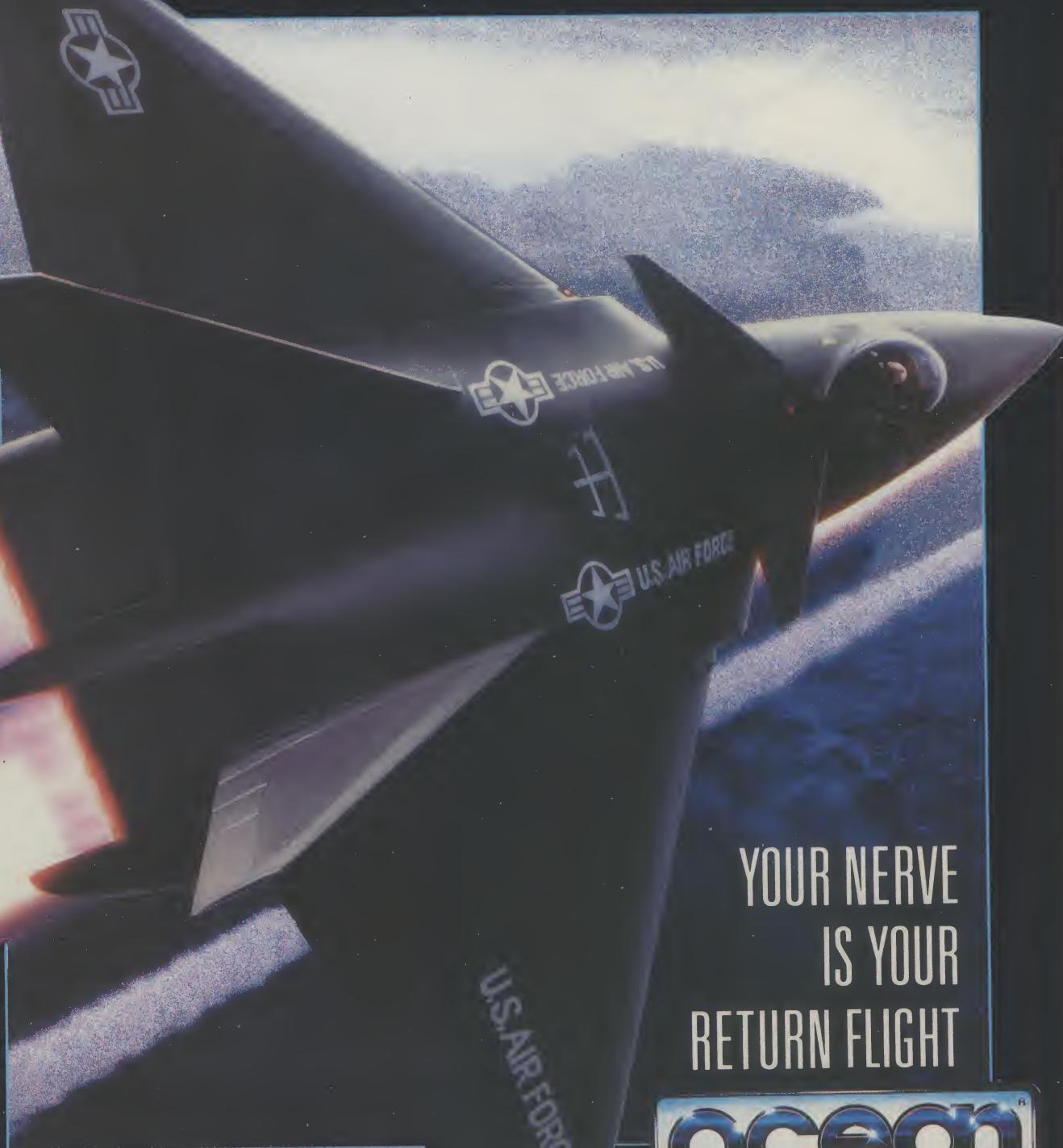


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RED hot TAPE



If you thought that all you did with VCR's was watch *The Fly* and *Gone with the Wind*, think again. John Cook checks out a box of tricks that can turn the humble vid into a powerful games system...

In the field of consumer electronics, the success story of the decade, on both sides of the Atlantic, has to be the Video Tape Recorder. Probably the most sophisticated piece of electronic equipment ever to enter the home, the VCR has rocketed from zero percent market penetration in the seventies to the present, almost saturation level. How many people do you know with a TV without a VCR?

Of course, the dream of the marketing entrepreneur – once a piece of equipment is installed into the home – is to get an associated piece of hardware installed next to it as fast as possible, to enhance the utility of the original machine and prolong its useful life. But after head cleaners, dust covers and aerobics tapes, where the hell do you go with a VCR?

The problem is that in its unadulterated form, watching a video is a completely passive experience and the medium itself totally sequential – you sit there and watch a pre-recorded tape from the beginning right through to the end. What the VCR lacks, baring the odd intervention with the remote control, is that magical attribute, interactivity.

Video cameras, it's true, have allowed the cinematically gifted consumer to put down his own images on tape but, once the image is captured and in the can, the control over the image itself is limited – unless you have full access to the editing suite and even then you still haven't got past the problem of the complete lack of interactivity.

So what are millions of consumers unknowingly waiting for? Interactive VCR, that's what, and the whole concept is a lot closer to coming to market than you can imagine, with the first unit just launched onto the market in the USA this month – the Ideal Viewmaster System. And if you're thinking that this is of no interest at all, you're wrong. Interactive VCR isn't necessarily all about corporate training schemes – it's about games, since most of those VCR's in the home are there for one reason: entertainment. The big boys know when they're on to a good one...

THE COST

The Viewmaster is aimed primarily at younger gamesters, and although it's certainly not the total fulfilment of the promise of what Interactive VCR can offer, it's definitely a step in the right direction, demonstrating the basic principles that will apply to systems following on – if and when they happen.

Priced at under \$100 retail, the Viewmaster can overlay computer graphics onto a video image, letting you play simple games side by side with cartoon or TV images. The code for the games is encoded on the Video tape, interleaved with the Video signal, so the units "know" what point the tape is at in the run – and so when to end the game and start loading the code of another.

In effect, the interactivity is limited to the player and the graphics, with the video images serving to introduce the various games and act as backgrounds to them, so its usefulness is limited, but it does serve to show that the principle of Interactive VCR can work, and work well. Early laser disk games worked in much the same way, overlaying a computer generated image of a space-ship on an exotic video landscape. They were pretty naff by today's standards, but the boffins have something up their sleeves that could change everything...

HYPER-INTERACTIVE

These other systems, presently under wraps, are truly interactive and can produce fabulous results. Unfortunately we can't, for legal reasons, mention the unit by name – so we'll call it System X. Check this out and get excited...

System X has four independently accessible tracks of video on a single tape with 12 tracks of sound. There's a sophisticated controller so all the tracks can be displayed simultaneously, if necessary, with complete control over the viewing window (or windows) size plus a high resolution graphics overlay capability. This is the kind of spec that makes professional game designers drool – it does truly give you a chance of true interactivity – the kind that is only in prototype with CDI at present.

IVT VS CDI

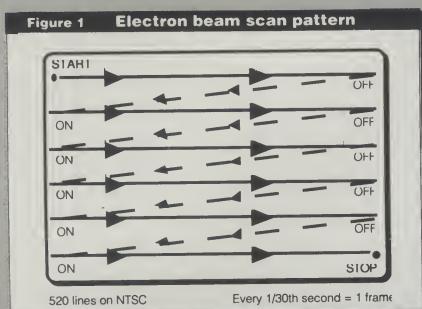
Both Interactive Video Tape and Compact Disk Interactive are still in their infancy – but it would be a foolish prophet to write either of them off, or mark one far superior than the other. On the face of it, CDI has to win hands down. 600 Meg of random access data, a powerful 68000 based machine and the might of big electronics companies behind it. But look what happened between Laservision and VCR in the past.

Price is a powerful factor, and it's well known that if CDI comes to market in the next year, you are going to have to fork out in excess of £1000 to grab it, initially. That's a lot. And CDI, in its present configuration, still finds it difficult to animate a whole screen of video convincingly.

Tape has no problem with this, but its sequential access is more tricky to handle and certainly more limited – Interactive VCR would need a 4 track system to truly compete. The technology is there, and a high end Interactive VCR system would retail at less than £300 – if only the will was there. Interesting, eh?

HOW VIEWMASTER WORKS

Exactly how do you make VCR interactive? It's not easy, but with a little technological know-how, it can be done. The Viewmaster system is relatively low tech, with a single video track that is constantly running, the normal audio track, and an extra track of digital sound – used for game codes and sound effects squeezed in on what is called the Vertical Blanking Interval (see figure 1).

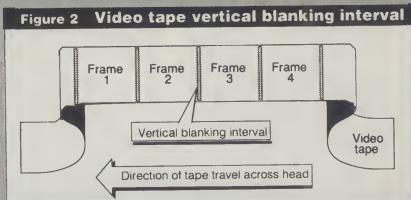


The electron beam scans the phosphor screen from top to bottom, stimulating the phosphor to produce light. By altering the intensity of the beam as it travels, areas of light and dark are built up, creating the visual image. When the beam reaches the STOP point, it has to travel back to the START.

This is the area of the screen beyond the usual scan of the beam that makes up the TV picture every 30th of a second. In fact, it's the area where, on a UK TV picture, the Teletext information is displayed, needing, of course, a decoder to display the

information as actual screens of text.

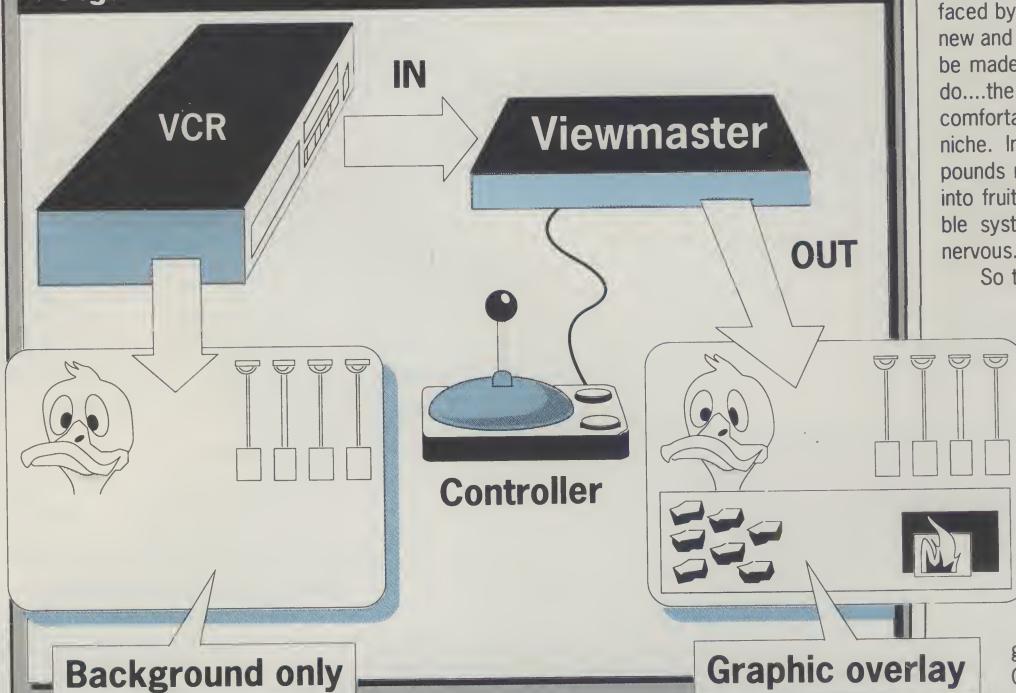
It's easier to think of VBI like this when you think of tape – it takes a finite time for the beam to make its way from the bottom right of the screen back up to the start of the next frame at the top left. Considering that the tape is running at a constant speed while this is happening, it means you have a small area of tape between each frame, which you can use as you wish. (See Fig 2).



The tiny time gap as the electron beam flies from the bottom of the screen back to the top is the secret to interactive video techniques, providing a 'window' for data to be transmitted and processed by the Viewmaster unit. On tape, it is represented by the Vertical Blanking Interval (VBI).

In the case of Viewmaster, it's used to carry the program code to the download to the Viewmaster unit, exactly like you'd load a program into any tape based computer – only as it's giving the information in the gap between TV frames (and not on the audio channel either, remember) – the loading of the program is completely transparent to the user.

Figure 3 The Viewmaster system



The Viewmaster isn't much more complicated than, say, a Spectrum. It's a graphics generating device that sits between the VCR and the TV with electronics to Gen-lock its own graphics onto the VCR's video picture. It's these graphics that form the interactive part of the experience, with the video forming the background and a link between the games. When the time for a game has elapsed, the old program code is dumped, and new code downloaded for a new game, while the game itself is being "introduced" by a new section of video action. Simple, but effective.



Ludwig von Drake is your host on The Disney Cartoon Arcade...The message on the blackboard could be generated by the Viewmaster if gameplay demanded...

This technology has already been developed by an 'American company' (no names, no pack drill) and could hit the market right now at a price point of about £200. Interested? Who wouldn't be! The trouble with this baby, however, is that the system has outgrown the original backers' expectations...and now they don't know what to do with it. Wealthy techno freaks are cordially invited to send eight figure cheques into the Ace editorial offices and we'll do our best to put you in touch with the relevant group!

Joking aside, this level of technology, this level of interactivity, does seem (inexplicably) to throw normally semi-sane marketing executives into paroxysms of catatonic seizure. The problem is, there has never been the kind of interactivity we are talking about here in a consumer electronic product. And few people have the confidence in the intelligence of the general public and the vision in design and exploitation terms, to realise the full potential such a system could have. In the eyes of the men in suits, us video users have square eyes, pinhead brains, and are only able to understand words beginning with 'Aaghghg!' or 'Mmmmmmm!'.

System X is stuck with the same problem faced by CDI and similar technologies – it is so new and so, potentially, revolutionary that it can be made to do almost anything you want it to do...the only thing it can't do is be stuck in a comfortable and easily classifiable marketing niche. In a situation where many millions of pounds must be spent to bring such a system into fruition, the nebulous quality of such flexible systems make execs and backers alike, nervous. Very nervous.

So that is the state of play with Interactive VCR at present. One simple – but effective for its target audience – system on the market now. At least one technically advanced system waiting for someone to do something with it. And millions of consumers with VCRs waiting for something that will change their video tape machine into a games machine. Or a powerful educational tool. Or an exciting information provider. Or anything that anyone with enough imagination can program it for. If only the Cosmic Remote Control had a Fast Forward...

THE CINEMWARE CONNECTION

So much for the hardware – but what about the software?

Ideal – backers of the Viewmaster – originally approached Disney to produce a game for the system using the world famous Disney

characters, such as Donald Duck, Goofy and everyone's favourite rodent, Mickey Mouse. Having no experience in the game field, who else should Disney approach in turn to produce it for them, but the 'masters of the interactive movie on computer' – the Cinemaware Corporation?

Experience and expertise gained through producing classic games like *Defender of the Crown* and *Rocket Ranger* proved useful for the company, who handed over the project to its Interactive Dept, headed up by ex-rock star, movie maker David Riordan. Design and production was done in-house, with the actual programming of the Viewmaster unit done by Ideal technicians. After, 'trying a bunch of ideas' and six months of hard work, the Disney Cartoon Arcade was born.

The tape is a series of 9 simple arcade games (mostly overlaid on video) linked together by cartoon footage introduced by Disney character Ludwig von Drake.

In fact, although the running commentary made by Ludwig is all about the Viewmaster and tell you how to play all the games, only existing cartoon footage was used by Cinemaware – it was carefully selected and redubbed by Disney to a newly written script. The effect is very convincing.

GETTING FIRED UP

Ludwig introduces a segment of cartoon classics – such as Goofy trying to shovel coal into a furnace – and then goes on to explain how the game works. Coal and furnace graphics are now overlaid onto the bottom half of the screen and the user has to try and fire the coal into the furnace, while the furnace door is open – using the controller. After a set period of time (all the game activity must be ended at exactly the right time or the overlay effect would be spoilt) the game ends, Ludwig goes into his next routine and the unit remembers your score.

At the end of all nine games (around 30 minutes of elapsed time), you are given a total score and invited to play again. Simple, but effective – kids of the target age range love the idea of cartoon characters actually talking to them and enjoy the challenge of the basic hand/eye and puzzle games.

Ideal must have liked the final result too – the Cinemaware-designed Disney tape is bundled with the machine, with extra tapes (six others in all) featuring Sesame Street and Muppet characters weighing in at around \$25.

WHEN WILL WE GET IT?

The Viewmaster concept was developed as far back as 1985 with the Belgium firm of Sydec originally planning a four track system. This was soon cut down to the single track that now exists to keep it in the price bracket suitable for the toy market – below \$100.



Dave Riordan of Cinemaware

SYSTEM X

Getting four tracks, onto a piece of video tape is much harder and requires a fair amount of electronic wizardry to both accomplish the feat and switch freely between them. What happens is this...

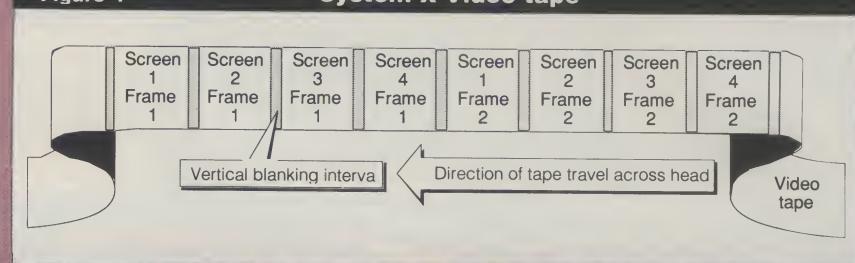
On the video tape itself the information for each 'track' is not sequential, but interleaved between information for other tracks (see Fig 4). Thus the information for Track

separately sized window or just filling the screen like a normal TV picture.

As well as being able to select between tracks – as allowed by the program – the System X unit can overlay complex graphics onto the video image/s, which can be under the control of the user – as in a game – or just used as a scoreboard or other type of graphic overlay. The overhead in inter-

Figure 4

System X Video tape

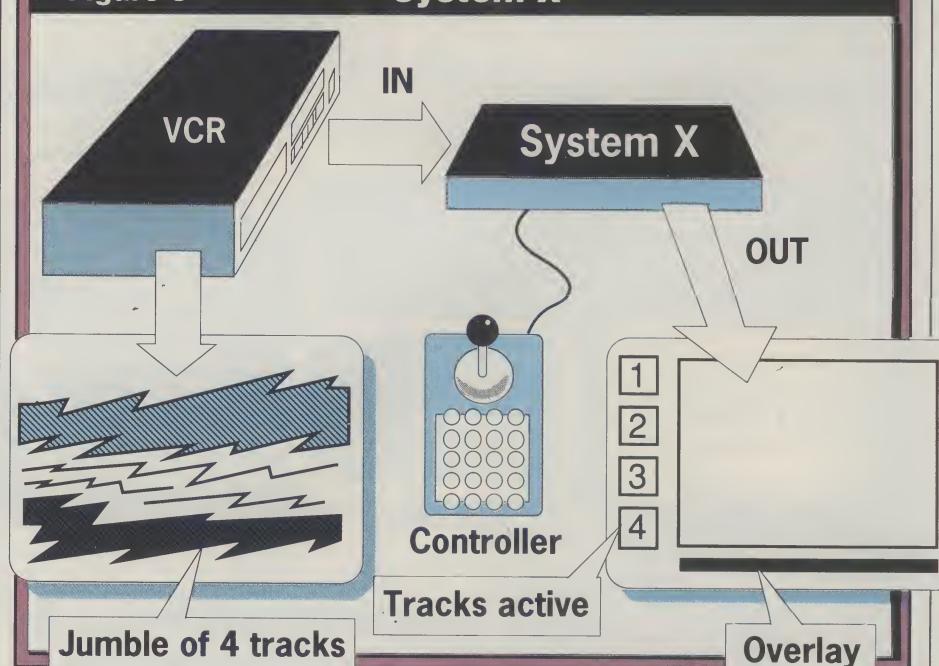


1 is found on frames 1, 5, 9, 13, etc. That for Track 2 on frames 2, 6, 10, 14, and so on. Of course, the VBI is still used to carry code to program the System X unit, which selects which tracks to display, and how to process them. As desired, all or any of the tracks can be played at once...or repeated over and over if you wanted, each in its

leaving the frames in this fashion is a reduced frame rate on screen, but the lowest that System X goes to, even when displaying all four tracks at once is 15 frames per second – only marginally worse than NTSC quality and still pretty good by standard video game standards when you consider the image quality of the VCR.

Figure 5

System X



Major development of the system went from 1986 to 1988, with the unit now coming to market in Fall 1989. The principle concept of Audio Switching was developed by Michael Freeman of ACTV in New York, along with Eric Schmit of Sydec. Other key engineers working on the project included Eric Beck, Tina Eden and Heri Joyaux, along with Gary Evans who was responsible for the inclusion of the colour graphics chip...the unit was originally designed with a black and white overlay display in mind.

Gary himself is confident in the future of both the product and the underlying concept – 'It seems to us that interactive television is

inevitable', he states, although at the same time worried that the complexity of the concept makes advertising and marketing a real problem – having to rely at the end of the day on simple word of mouth endorsement.

When will the Viewmaster be on sale in Europe? Long term plans exist, but it all depends on the initial success of the unit in the US and Japan. Converting the system to PAL and SECAM TV standards is possible, but not easy, due to different resolutions and frame rates. Only time will tell whether it makes the big jump over the pond.

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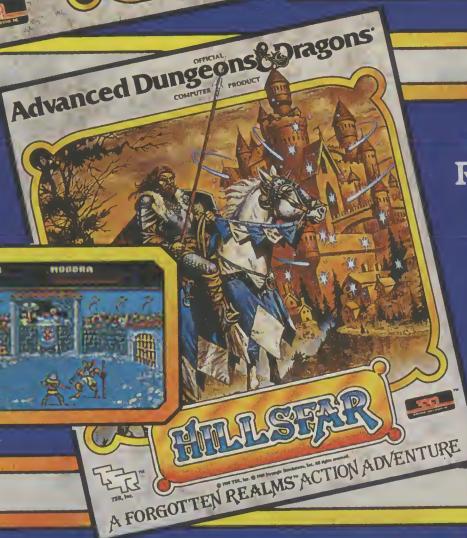


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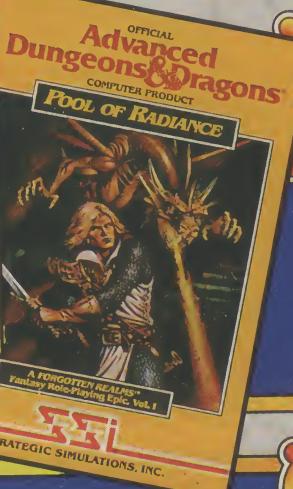
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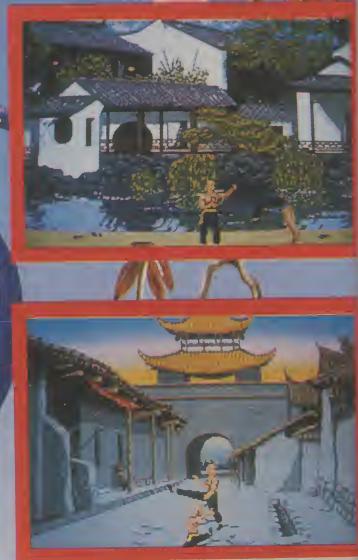
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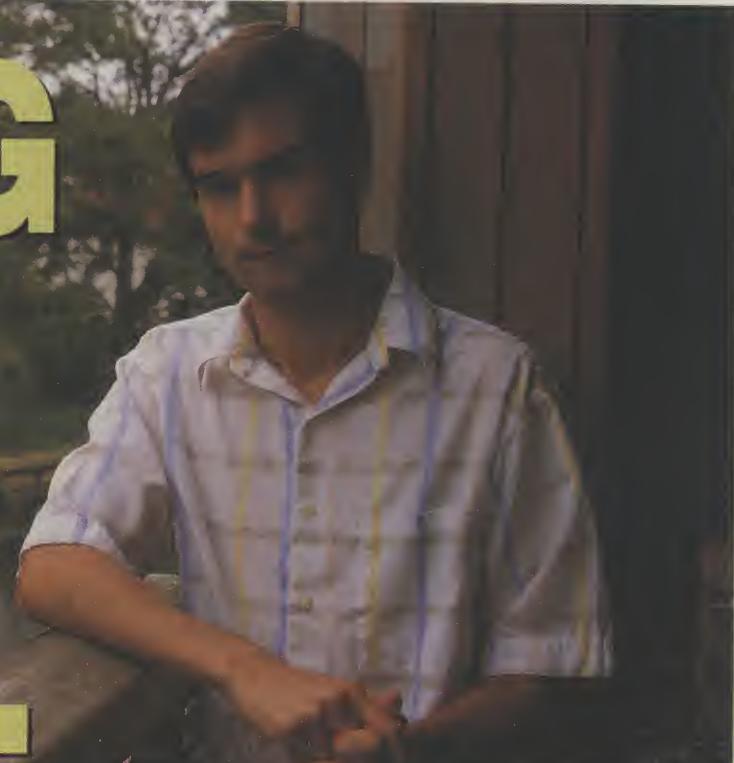
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A LONG HARD ROAD...



When Eugene Lacey visited David Braben in his Cambridge retreat, he expected to hear all about *Elite Two*. But Britain's most respected programmer took him far beyond it, with some compelling – and unexpected – comments on the future of games technology...

When co-author of *Elite* David Braben gets low on inspiration he only has to stroll to the balcony of his swish Cambridge flat and gaze out across the Cam to Magdalene College. Just a few feet below his window students and tourists punt up and down easily within ear shot, though the communications is usually just one way: 'It's amazing', he remarks, '...the number of drunks who start singing 'Just One Cornetto'.

The penthouse flat and Audi Quattro parked in the garage are the spoils of *Elite* and *Virus* – best sellers all over the world, but it's typical of the calm, unassuming personality of Braben that he should reinvest his proceeds from the enormously successful games in a place to work. Not a Ferrari or Paul Smith suit in sight, just a very nice place to live and work – which is precisely what David Braben has been doing for the last eighteen months – coding away on *Elite II*.

RING THE BELL

Although the entryphone card reads 'Braben and Bell' – Braben's former flat mate, and co-

author of *Elite*, Ian Bell is no longer involved in the development of *Elite II*. 'We started on the design of *Elite II* in 1984 when we were still at University. Ian Bell wrote an interpretive language to write it, but we were forced to stop. After about a year we decided to give up. The design for *Elite II* was very ambitious. It was running – but too slowly. It just wasn't doing what we wanted it to. We were programming on the BBC and in the end decided it was foolish to design a game that could be done on an 8bit machine. Ian Bell then gave up on the project.'

The famous Braben/Bell partnership thus reached an amicable conclusion and *Elite II* was shelved until Spring '87 when David Braben decided to resurrect it after completing *Virus*. But don't get too excited – there's still at least another year's work to do on the game before it hits the shops in Christmas 1990.

'The game is designed to follow logically from *Elite*. It takes a lot of the ideas that we knew we couldn't do in *Elite* and incorporates them. There will be very much greater scope in terms of what the player can do – for instance

all the planets will be modelled correctly and you will be able to fly down to the surface. There will be cities on the surfaces of planets and a lot going on for the player to do'

'The graphics will be very much different to what's gone before. Despite some people saying the graphics in *Virus* represent the planet sequence of *Elite II* that is absolutely untrue. It is not all of that style even. Everything will be in first person view as if seen from a space ship. Unlike *Elite* the player will not be restricted to a space vehicle. There is a car that can be driven as well – and a VERY large space ship.'

'There is also a war going on. The player can decide the extent to which he wants to get involved and interact with it. The trading will be there, but in a much more low key way – and it will be far more realistic.'

Braben is particularly pleased with the *Elite II* map. 'It will completely simulate a galaxy, unlike *Elite*, which was a pretty poor stab with its two dimensional map with its two thousand planets.' To hear someone describing *Elite* as a 'pretty poor stab' is a sobering experience for a games reviewer! But Braben doesn't seem to make sacred cows out of his previous successes.

ON FUTURE COMPUTERS AND THE ACE CHALLENGE

Braben is not convinced the ACE Challenge Computer is the way forward.

'It seems incredibly complicated. Your plan is to have more or less two of everything. If I were building a machine for the future – I would

"I didn't set out to think how I could do a better *Elite* – a sort of *Elite* with bells and whistles. The Basic *Elite* design was very simple. The computer didn't have to keep track of very much – all that is kept track of is the number of kills, legal status, amount of cash held etc – there will be a lot more for it to do in *Elite II*, internal politics and so forth".



put in just one very powerful custom chip because then the circuit board gets vastly shrunk and the cost of external links comes down – and if you imagine that a future machine will need very fast access to the RAM – and possibly a very wide bus – say 64bit, or at least 32bit, then you've got all these tracks on the circuit board which hikes the cost of the machine enormously.'

Braben's dream machine is likely to be based on some of the latest chip designs. 'The 88000 processor or Intel's I 860; they are two very interesting processors. They both do an awful lot within the chip – floating point in the instruction set – rather than having an external floating point processor.'

These chips are yet to be incorporated into new computers but they are certain to be used in the near future with IBM announcing an intention to use the I 860 – a development welcomed by Braben. 'Claims are made for the I 860 that up 120 MIPS can be used at peak execution speed. With that sort of power it seems totally unnecessary to have a separate chip to do things like 3D maths as you suggest in the ACE Challenge design'.

"Filled polygons are certainly not going to be flavour of the month for very much longer."

Braben believes that many future hardware designs are making the wrong assumptions about what the software will be like. Although the use of customised chips – such as the Tritter in the ACE Challenge design, for example – are useful for fulfilling certain contemporary design requirements, they are limited to that function. Braben would prefer a more flexible computer that can adopt to changes in software design. He illustrates his point by referring to 3D designs, adding that our ACE Challenge computer would be a 'pain in the neck to use... At the time the Amiga came out, the few 3D games that there were were line drawn – they put a line drawer in the Blitter and everyone did line drawn games. That was thought to be the future of 3D programming, but if you look at 3D games now very few of them are line drawn. Filled polygons are what you've got now, but even they are certainly not going to be flavour of the month for very much longer.'

ON FASTER PROCESSORS AND MORE MEMORY...

'It will make a big difference...If you make the effort, having more memory will make things go faster because instead of evaluating functions you can have them in a big table. You then just get it out of the table precalculated.'

'Speed will make things easier – the games will be able to do a lot more in the time allotted – people like nice smooth displays and it will be possible to include a lot more detail in these smooth displays. Games are currently running quite slowly. You will be able in the future to have a lot more interaction with moving objects. I would like to think we can approach the interactive film stage in games'

There are a whole lot of ways 3D graphics can be modified.'

'Once you start talking about machines in three or four years time you've then got sufficient power to start doing things like real reflections. The current set of machines can only just manage to polygon draw. They can't do things like arbitrary texturing, shadowing or reflections. Polygons are useless for doing things like reflections because it's not polygons you're drawing – you are actually drawing images of what a reflective scene would look like'.

INTERACTIVE MOVIE HYPE

Despite claims by various companies that they already provide interactive movies, Braben is far from convinced. 'We are nowhere near it... I mean something where it would be like buying a video and interacting with the world portrayed by the images you see, that kind of things is years and years and years away – you can't even do it on Crays now!'

Braben sees a long hard road to the interactive movie world but is confident we will get there. He believes the necessary steps are 'a lot of effort in software and the new brand of hardware along the lines of the I 860 type. From its sheer speed and generality of its instruction set, that is approaching the sort of speed we'd need'. If Braben could have taken

an I 860 back in a time ship to around about 1984 Elite would have been a very different game.

More sophisticated game designs are needed to exploit the power of the new machines to the full. Braben believes there are signs already of games designers using greater power more intelligently. The problem with development currently is the limitations of the machines. 'You may decide I want to do this, wow this is going to be amazing, but then you realise it is going to run something like once every ten minutes, if it runs at all. On the other hand, we have still got a lot more to get out of the Amiga and the ST.'

ON 32 BIT COMPUTERS AND SWIRLING CLOUDS

On 32 bit computers Braben is a firm fan of the Archimedes and believes the Fujitsu FM Towns is 'very interesting' but believes for the gamer in the street that '...it is not as big a leap as from 8 to 16 bit because the main thing people have noticed from 8 to 16 bit has been the increase of colours and the resolution of the screens. The improvement from 16 bit to 32 bit will be tenuous. It will be more of a subtle thing. The graphics are doing more, they are more sophisticated.'

'Games like R-Type don't need the power of a 32 bit processor. The Amiga already has



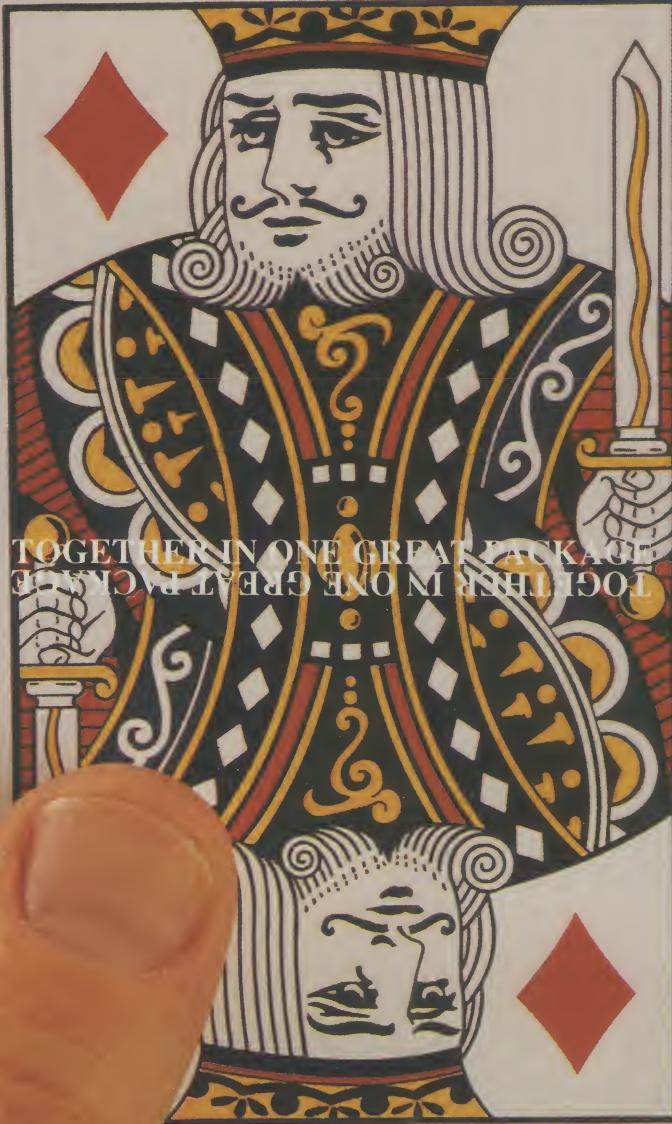
'In Virus the game was designed to run on a machine that is not truly capable of doing a proper 3D full world view – it is capable of doing it, but I liked the idea of putting shadows on the trees and there is a fair bit of detail in it'. With an I 860 computer "...in Virus it would have been possible to have a horizon going off into infinity. One of the main problems of the game is that you can't see very far. A first person view would also have been possible. The game design from the point of view of what the player is doing is very simple'.

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no trouble recreating something like *R-Type*. If you've got a more powerful CPU, it just means the processor is going to spend more time doing nothing. However, the sort of games where it will make a phenomenal difference are games of the *Elite*/3D environment type where it does require a lot of processing power to get anything that looks impressive. As far as *Elite* type games are concerned the power will vastly effect the graphics and also the feel of the game. It will be possible, for example, to have big swirling clouds.'

"It will become more and more the case that the design of the game is more important than the speed of the machine."

'With something like the FM Towns machine relatively few games will fully exploit the screen. Anything that involves a two dimensional display – the *R*-Types and *Defenders* of this world – will only see a tenuous improvement with increased computing power: once it comes to the point where the computer can repaint the entire display 50 times a second, with no problem, further increases are redundant.'

'However, there are game designs coming through that will exploit more sophisticated graphics and I believe people will eventually be weaned off the umpteenth variation on *R-Type*. The only type of game that needs greater power is the 3D game or the scenario with very, very intricate game play – certain simulators, for example.'

ON CD SOFTWARE

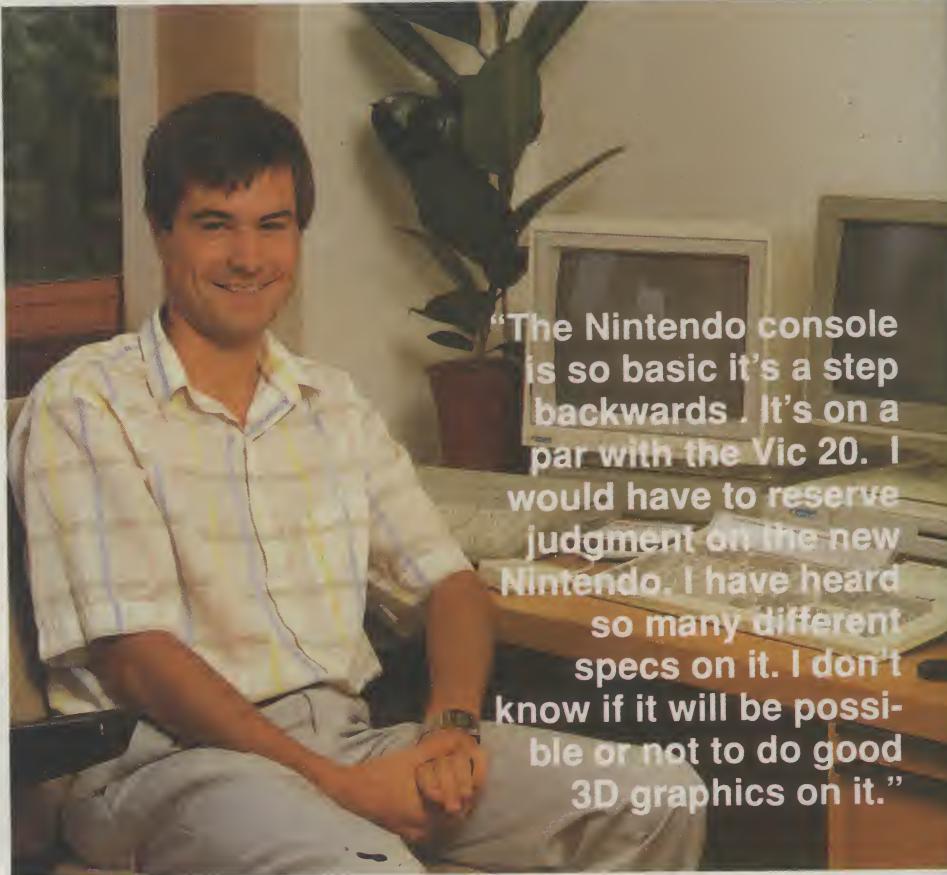
Braben believes the vast amounts of memory made accessible by CD '...is more likely to be used than the extra power of processors. It would be very useful to have access to vast databases. You could provide real maps of areas in which you could adventure. You could have adventures taking place in real towns. That sort of thing is just not possible at the moment. People make a sort of stab at it with scenery disks for flight sims where you could about make out that you are flying over San Francisco with a very basic outline of the Golden Gate bridge. I'm talking about something where you can actually walk down the streets and explore – and then you can set a game scenario within that reality...That amount of data would be very useful'.

ON CONSOLES AND VIC 20'S

'The PC Engine has the same problem as the machine suggested in the ACE Challenge. They have pre-assumed the type of graphics. That is probably fair enough in something like the PC Engine. It is drawing very large bit dumps, sprites, and a large number of colours, and is doing it reasonably quickly'.

'But it is a fairly slow machine and also the sort of machine that it is very hard to do a different type of game on. The CD on it is just a gimmick. It's really little more than a fast loading device. I don't consider that to be a form of CD.'

Many thanks to David Braben for granting us this exclusive interview. We look forward to getting our hands on Elite II...and Elite III...and....



"The Nintendo console is so basic it's a step backwards. It's on a par with the Vic 20. I would have to reserve judgment on the new Nintendo. I have heard so many different specs on it. I don't know if it will be possible or not to do good 3D graphics on it."

ON COSMIC OSMO AND HYPER-DRIVE GAMES

Never mind the quantity, what about the quality is Braben's view of Cyan Software's much talked about Macintosh game.

Things like *Cosmic Osmo* are an amusing irrelevance. They've just put an enormous number of pictures on a disk all linked Hypercard-style. It's very easy to make a lot of data – even compressed pictures occupy quite a lot of memory. It's an interesting idea to say that exploration is the sole point of the game. Exploration is fun – but it does need an awful lot to support it. That can't be the only thing to the game. There has to be other things going on if it's just a slide show – however beautifully drawn there is ultimately no point. It's a pre-designed tree, a sort of *Dragon's Lair*'.

'What's more, it isn't a world that you can arbitrarily explore. You can't blow a hole in the wall and go through it. It's all pre-arranged. Once you've done it, you've done it. There may be one cupboard you haven't opened but that's it.'



Cosmic Osmo – just a cosmic irrelevance?

STRYX



- ★ **Ultra smooth 8 way scrolling**
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- ★ **Multi-directional free format weapon usage**
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You're really up against it this time. Those revolting robots have finally upped and turned their horribly powerful weapons on their kind human masters.

Someone's got to stop it before it all gets out of hand. I mean, you just can't have bloodthirsty Cyborg assassins roaming the streets of Dome City and expect the citizens to put up with it. Who on earth is going to sort out the mess? You guessed – you get the job.

Fortunately, you are just a little bit on the special side. You are Stryx, the product of Project Alpha Secure, the meanest fighting, smartest thinking machine ever invented. Half-man, half-robot, you are the business, the only one who can stop those wicked Cyborgs.

You'll have to work hard, though, blasting hordes of the revolting creatures (such a sad waste of scrap metal) and rescuing the keys to the Lifeforce.

So, Stryx, you'd better get your jet pack on for some high level robot stomping through the immensely complex underground world of the Dome cities. It's a tough assignment, and time is running out.

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Screen Shots from the Atari ST Version



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Tower of Babel is an intricate 3D strategy game involving an interconnecting network of towers, platforms and lifts all rendered in solid 3D with innovative light and shading techniques. Take control of robot spiders and program them to solve problems and puzzles and interact with other creatures, such as Pushers, Zappers and Grabbers. Alternatively, real time control is available to you at any time for instantaneous reaction to the game's developments. For the more adventurous among you, there is a complete game designer, allowing the construction of your own series of towers, platforms and lifts. Attempt to fox your friends with your own fiendishly difficult creations. More than just a game, more than just a puzzle - Tower of Babel is a whole new concept in strategy gaming.

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SCREEN TEST

PIC CURVE POWER

The PIC – Predicted Interest Curve – is the most sophisticated reviewing tool around. Here's why...

The curve is divided into six sections, indicating the player's adrenalin level after one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, and one year. But this tells you an awful lot than just what your interest level will be at any given time (although that's obviously important in itself)...

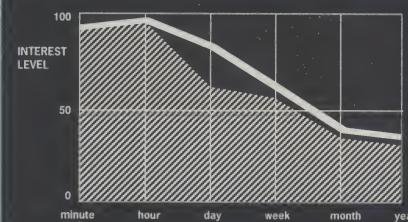
For example, a high one minute rating means that the game must look fantastic and get you all excited from the word go. That means it's probably a good game to show off to the neighbours – after all, they probably aren't going to pay attention for much more than a minute, after which they'll go back to drinking coffee and making rude remarks about 'those awful hostile games the boys play these days'.

The minute, hour, and day ratings can tell you a lot about a game too. If there's a dip here, followed by a rise, you've got a game that may take a bit of getting into – not recommended if you like to get down to something quick and easy. Alternatively, the graphics may put you off for a while until the gameplay starts to grip. Check out the PIC comment for more details.

Finally, you've got the month and year ratings. The better a game holds up here the more deserving it is of your hard-earned cash.

PIC curve construction takes a lot of playing on the part of ACE reviewers. PIC curve analysis is an art in itself. The reward is knowing just what you're getting when you make the decision to splash out on *Mutant Macdonald Gettysburgers*...or *F15 Strike Eagle II* – just one of this month's excellent examples of today's software technology.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



The mountains glow with certain promise on the horizon of *Continental Circus* from Virgin/Mastertronic – see the 16-bit racer feature starting on page 79.



DON'T FORGET THE UPDATES!

We don't just review the latest releases. We also check out conversions of old games onto new formats. So there could well be a recent conversion for YOUR machine...ST, PC, and Amiga owners get lucky this month on pages 97 and 98.

THE ACE REVIEWING SYSTEM

PIC CURVES

This unique feature to the ACE reviewing system charts the interest level that a game stimulates over a period of time. The curve is accompanied by a comment to explain why it's the shape it is. Find out more in the Pic Curve Power panel on this page...

Each review also carries special 'Version Boxes' that give you details of the game's implementation on a specific machine. These boxes include ratings for...

GRAPHICS

All aspects of the game's graphics with the limitations of each machine taken into account. A good-looking Spectrum game will therefore score higher than an average-looking Amiga one.

AUDIO

The music and sound effects are rated here. A high rating is

possible on even limited machines like the Spectrum and PC if the computer's shortcomings are cleverly sidestepped.

IQ FACTOR

Yes, sometimes you have to use your brain. This rating evaluates the risk of mental effort – which some people actually enjoy...Note that ACE readers are generally reckoned to be more intelligent than other human beings, so the ratings may be lower than you expect...

FUN FACTOR

Basically a measure of mindless addictiveness. Games like *Arkanoid* and *Flying Shark* require virtually zero brain power but are still remarkably addictive. Most coin-ops score well here because they are designed for instant satisfaction.

ACE RATING

This is not just plucked out of the air but is calculated from the area under the PIC Curve. To get a really high rating a game will not only have to be very addictive but stand the test of time as well. Just because a game does not get over 900 does not mean we are not recommending it – the following is a general guide to what the ratings mean.

900+ A classic game, recommended without reservation.

800-899 A superb game, but perhaps lacking the long-term depth to last into the month and year categories.

700-799 Still highly recommended, but probably has a couple of aspects to the gameplay that take the edge off it.

600-699 The 'fair' zone, where it tends to be very good 'if you like that sort of thing'.

500-599 This still has good things going for it, but the game clearly has some noticeable problems.

400-499 Problems with gameplay and programming make this an inferior game.

300-399 Not only is the gameplay bad but the design was probably flawed in the first place.

200-299 Things are getting really serious now...

100-199 ZX81 games running on an Amiga.

Under 100 Nothing has ever achieved this appalling level of rating. If anything ever does, it wouldn't even be worth having it for free.

VERSION BOXES

This covers version-specific information on graphics, audio, loading problems etc. If there's no box for your machine but a version is planned, it'll be covered as an update in a later issue.

THE TEAM

...includes **Steve Cooke**, one of the original editors of this award-winning magazine, known to thousands through his many other previous identities, including *Zzap!*'s White Wizard, The Pilgrim, and Old Baldy.

Eugene Lacey is the man who put Britain's top-selling games magazine, *C&VG*, on the map. Luckily for us, Eugene got fed up with writing for 8-year-olds and decided the time had come to tackle the challenge of ACE magazine. As one of Britain's most experienced games journalists, his word is LAW.

Ciaran Brennan should need no introduction. Formerly editor of *Zzap!* magazine, he's now deputy editor of *The One* and an honorary ACE reviewer.

Julian Rignall, formerly UK Coin Op champion, former editor of *Zzap!64*, and the man with his name on more hi-score tables on Brighton

Pier than anyone else.

Mike Pattenden is the editor of *Commodore User* – so he ought to know what he's talking about when it comes to C64 stuff. But he knows a thing or two about the Amiga, and is no dummy when it comes to other machines either.

Mark Patterson has put in two and a half years of games slavery for *Commodore User* and *C&VG* and knows everything there is to know about RPGs.

We don't review anything until we are 100% certain that we've got it right. We've checked them out thoroughly – now you can too.

BAT

OCEAN relicensed to clean up – again.

THIS must be the first time I can honestly say 'Great game shame about the film'.

No, I didn't like the movie. Not that it matters much as everyone has seen it by now anyway and (regardless of what I thought of it) there is no doubt that it provides excellent material for converting into computer entertainment.

This is the last of the mid-89 film block-busters to be converted to the home computer screen. We've had James Bond, Indiana Jones, and now the Caped Crusader from Gotham City enters the fray in what is by far the best of 'em all in terms of computer entertainment.

Right from the opening screens you can see and hear the quality of the conversion and get to grips with the Batgear you have always longed to have a go on. There is the famous Bat-rope with its Bat-anchor that latches onto window ledges and enables our hero to swing into action. As well as the Bat-shurikens that the super hero can lob at the villains to 'Kapow' them out of the action.

The game commences in the warehouse of Axis Chemicals where all sorts of toxic substances are leaking from pipes and dangerous gasses being exuded into the air. The Joker's men are everywhere

and Batman needs to be nimble to avoid them. His Batsuit has been made impregnable to bullets – up to a certain number. He is, however, helpless against the bombs being lobbed at him by the green suited villain. These will knock him off his rope or kill him should they make contact enough times.

This opening platform level makes for an absorbing game in its own right. Swinging around on the ropes is excellent fun – and nothing has ever been done like it before in a platform game – unless you count Cuthbert in The Jungle, in which case you're probably too busy collecting a pension to play this game. Of course there have been other ropes before but nothing as sophisticated as this. You have to be a sure shot when you throw your rope in order to swing into the right position, kicking a few villains into the middle of next week as you fly through the air.

Another neat graphical touch is the way the Bat-cap flies up when you jump to a platform below. The game has quality written all over it.

There are five levels in total. As well as the Axis Factory you will see action in the Bat Cave, Batmobile, Batwing, and face a final showdown with the Joker in Gotham Cathedral.

All of the sections of the game are entertaining and rewarding but the real thrill of the game is when you sit behind the wheel of the Batmobile. Ocean have correctly given this most attention of all – and what an excellent job they have made of it.

It plays like a sort of Bat-style Chase HQ coin-op which – considering Ocean have the rights to that coin-op – bodes well for more thrills to come from the Mancunian games house. The aim of the game here is to sort out the Joker's van which is speeding through the streets of Gotham City.

Taking the controls of the Batwing launches another 3D game which has been superbly executed. Reminiscent of Afterburner as you swoop low over the carnival taking out the balloons (filled with nerve gas) that the Joker is using to hold Gotham City to ransom.



The mask tells you who is winning



Batmobile enters the 16bit Grand Prix.

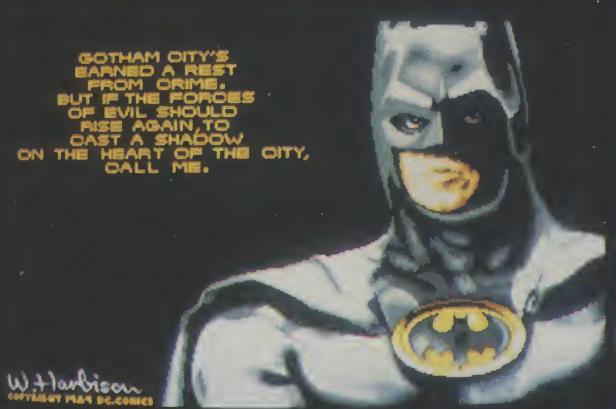
MAN

The final confrontation with the Joker takes place in Gotham Cathedral. This is another platform affair which is very similar to the Axis Factory. The map is different though – and equally vast – so be prepared to jot down a few simple sketch maps to help you find your way around as you track down the opposition.

Ocean have captured all of the atmosphere of the film but have sensibly concentrated on a few of the action sequences. This makes for five entertaining and challenging arcade games at the end of which (if you're successful) you'll triumph over the Joker without having to go through a complex arcade-adventure style challenge as you do, for example, in the recent Indy Action game. Maybe other licensee's will learn a lesson here.

Ocean are to be congratulated for putting so much effort into an excellent arcade game – especially when, given the Bat-hype, even Bat-shaped Space Invaders would have won them the number one slot on all formats. Proves that cynical commercialism does not always triumph over high personal and professional standards.

• Eugene Lacey



Amiga Batman - Commodore's joker in the pack to sell Amiga's this Xmas.

SPECTRUM VERSION

Only two colours on certain levels but retaining the same game play as the other versions. The Batmobile level is slightly different on the Spectrum in that it is a horizontally scrolling race – as opposed to the 3D version described above. Every bit as much fun to play as the 16-bit versions.

GRAPHICS 7 IQ FACTOR 8
AUDIO 7 FUN FACTOR 8

ACE RATING 911

AMIGA VERSION

Full of sound and graphical frills. There is a delightful screen when Jack Nicholson's Joker appears laughing, and later asks if you 'have ever danced in the pale moonlight'. Far superior sound and speed to all other versions as the Amiga flexes its muscles and shows its superiority in the Caped Crusader game.

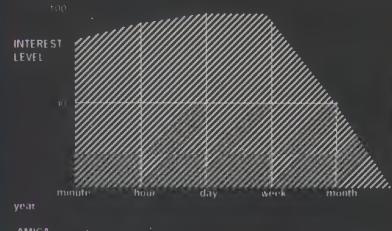
GRAPHICS 8 IQ FACTOR 8
AUDIO 8 FUN FACTOR 9

ACE RATING 922

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PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



It'll take you a while to sort out the Joker. It is good fun doing so, but ultimately Bat-hype will pass as will the appeal of this game.

The Sledgehammer – choose this option for raw power, but don't expect it to turn on a sixpence.

MIRROSOFT set down their wheels where 'God Save The Queen' has a different meaning...



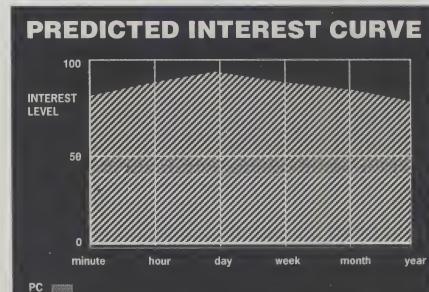
AND now the latest in a long line of 16-bit racing games, but is it good enough to knock Stunt Car Racer off the top spot? Read on and discover for yourself...

The Vette (short for Corvette, not the James Herriott type) has always been an immensely popular car, both for its looks and its power. For some strange reason, however, it has never had the benefits of factory sponsorship like Ferrari and Porsche have. Even so, that hasn't stopped Corvette owners taking them out on impromptu races through the city streets now and again. You are one of those owners.

Just a glance at the program and packaging will tell you that Vette is going to be something special. Programmed by the creators of the aerial masterpiece Falcon, Vette has all the complexity of design combined with clever simplicity in presentation that made Falcon a winner – and should make Vette a winner too.

First of all, you have to choose which of the four Corvettes to race, from a 1989 Stock, the safest and slowest, through to a custom Sledgehammer, with awful handling but capable of some immense speeds. Then you can choose which of the opponents to challenge, from a nice easy Porsche through to a Ferrari F40. Finally, you choose the race itself...

At this point, things really start to get interesting. The four races are basically from A to B in San Francisco. The amazing thing is, and this hasn't been done in a racing sim before, is that you are aren't told any route to take. Instead, it's up to you to find your own way there as you race through an accurately mapped version of the gay capital of the world.



Fun at the start, fun halfway through, and still fun at the end... It's one of 'those' games!

PC VERSION

Vette supports all colour graphics modes and looks good in all of them too. The update is amazingly fast and smooth and the use of colour is spot on. The sound is limited (surprise, surprise), but the game play certainly isn't. Drive down to your software dealer today!

GRAPHICS 9 **IQ FACTOR 6**
AUDIO 4 **FUN FACTOR 9**
ACE RATING 926

RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	£00.00dk	IMMINENT
AMIGA	£00.00dk	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£00.00dk	OUT NOW

Essentially, what you get as a result is a bundle of different games in one. You can play Beat the Police in The Narrow Back Streets, for example, or Race Across the Centre of The Park And Try to Kill as Many Pedestrians As Possible. The possibilities are almost endless...

The city itself, and therefore the whole game, is laid out with filled vectors, and very impressive they are too. Skyscrapers are real skyscrapers, you can almost hear the hoards of screaming kids on the school buses and you can practically feel the bump as you run over little ladies overladen with shopping.

As with Falcon, you have many different views to choose from. You can look out left, right and forward windows, with or without interior of the car to give you a wider view, or if it's more of an arcade game you want, you can choose the helicopter view, which gives you an OutRun sort of viewpoint (and, incidentally, easier to play).

Controls are as easy as falling through a concealed trap in the middle of a dark forest. Keys 1-5 change to gears 1 to 5, A sticks the car on Automatic transmission, C switches on and off the Cruise Control, and the usual joystick movements cover accelerate, brake, steer left, and steer right.

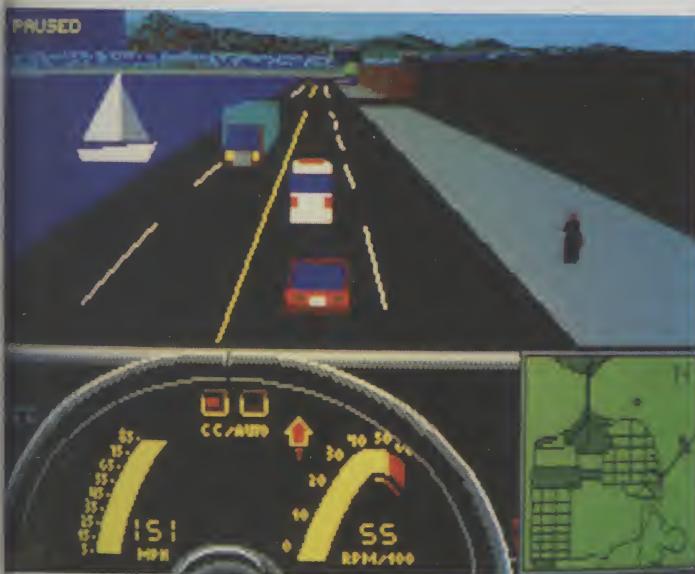
So how does it rate as a game? Brilliantly. We've waited for this one for quite a while and we're happy to say it's been worth every pulse-beat. It's fast, realistic, exciting, fun and there's enough variety to keep you playing forever, or maybe just a little less than that. It doesn't quite have the edge over Stunt Car, but it sure isn't far behind.

● Tony Dillon

SOCCER MATCH



Bridge ahead! but where do we head to next?



...Answer: check out the neighbourhood on the map.



Is that someone from RVF on that bike? Just one of the Vette viewpoints available...

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OUT IN OCTOBER ON
ATARI ST
CBM AMIGA

FREE
Win a trip
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IMPRESSIONS

TINTIN ON THE MOON

INFOGRAMES grow a little tuft of hair.

IN my youth, Tintin has to have been one of the most influential figures I ever came across, next to Asterix. And who could forget the massive two book epic, *Destination Moon* and *Conquest Of The Moon*. Cor, what a spiffing life Tintin led. Him and his pals Captain Haddock and Professor Calculus and his loveable dog, Snowy.

Now you too can live the space bound adventure that marks as a deep milestone in my reading life as *Lord Of The Rings*. Race through the stars in one of man's greatest ever achievements, the rocket ship, and land where no man has ever trod before. That mysterious hunk of rock that hangs so ominously in the night sky, the moon.

But bad things are afoot. The dastardly Colonel Boris has smuggled aboard the ship with the intent of sabotaging the mission. As you fly through space he will plant bombs to blow up vital parts of the ship and will set fire to others while at the same time trying to kill you with his high intensity laser gun and tying up all your pals.

But before all this happens, you have to fly through space a little. As you race through the first person perspective starfield, objects race out of the screen at you. Things you should avoid are large lumps of rock called asteroids (or in their native french l'asteroids). The other things that race toward you should definitely be collected. Large yellow pockets of energy race at you, and these have to be collected to top up your energy level. There are also red pods that race at you. Collect 8 of these to finish a flying section, of which there are four. Finish a section and you go into Tintin mode.

The game changes to a side on flip screen arcade adventure. On the left hand side of the

ST VERSION

Graphics and sound are pretty much the same as those in the Amiga version. Unfortunately Atari owners will also have to put up with the same poor gameplay.

GRAPHICS 8 IQ FACTOR 4
AUDIO 7 FUN FACTOR 3

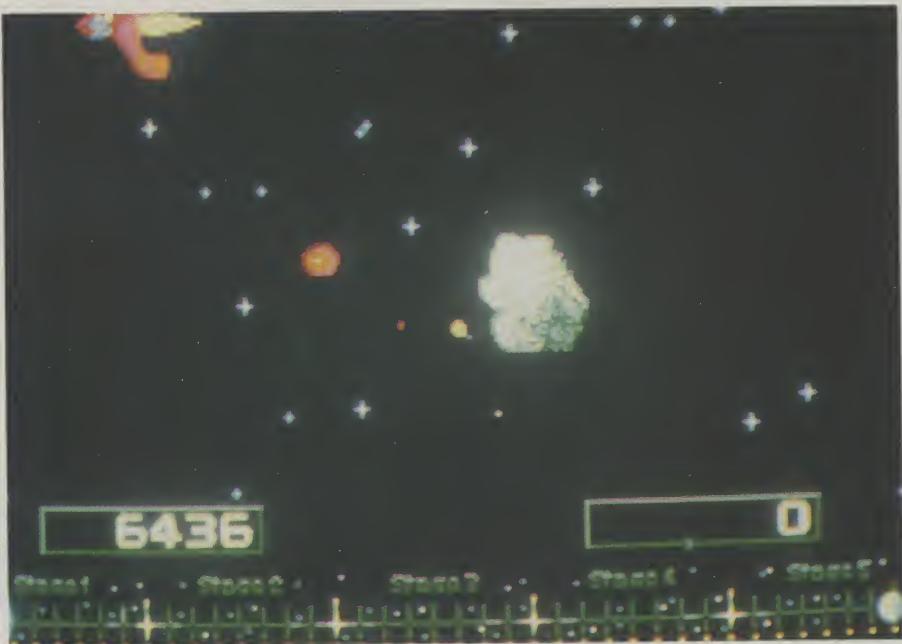
ACE RATING 675

AMIGA VERSION

Wonderfully stylised graphics and an atmospheric soundtrack thinly disguise a somewhat badly designed game. Not what it could have been.

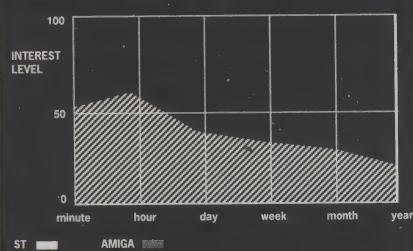
GRAPHICS 8 IQ FACTOR 4
AUDIO 7 FUN FACTOR 3

ACE RATING 675



Asteroids in 3D? Tintin's ship attempts to avoid the passing boulders, and usually fails!

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Initial graphical interest that soon dissipates thanks to the lack of gameplay.



Tintin and pals unbeknown to NASA, actually make it into space in the 50s!

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screen is a bar of warning lights. At the start of the section a couple of them will be lit, and during the course of the section more will light. The idea is to use Tintin to put out all the lights. Two of them show pictures of your friends. If they light, it means that on that part of the ship, the appropriate friend has been caught by Boris, and you must untie them simply by touching them. Another one that tends to flash a lot is the fire light. These mean that somewhere on the ship a fire has been started. You have to find a fire extinguisher and put all the

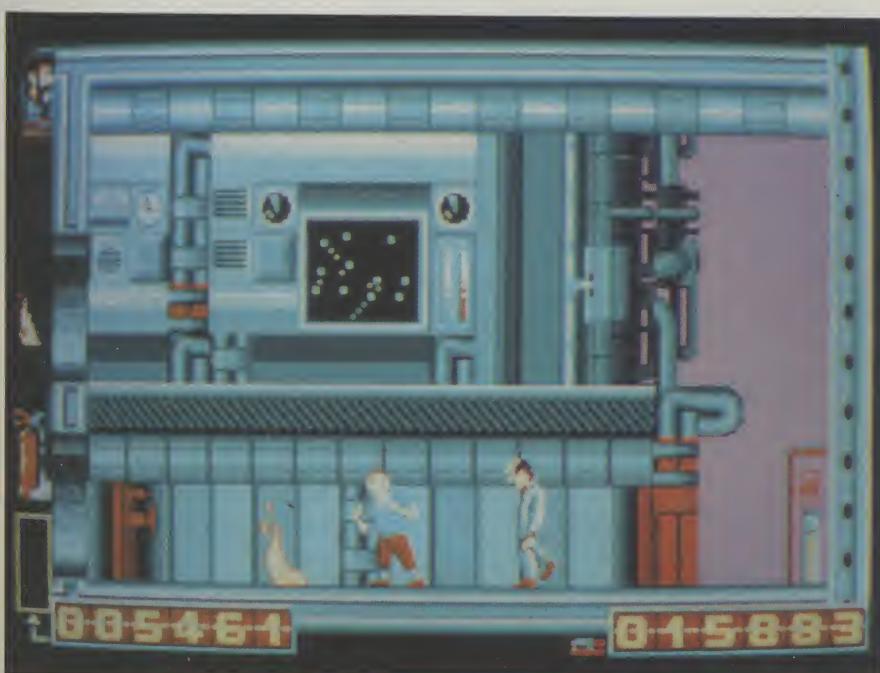
fires out. The final light that flashes is the bomb light. This is your main priority. Find the bomb, no matter where it is, and defuse it by touching it. Once you've turned off all the lights and captured the evil Boris by jumping on him or hitting him with the fire extinguisher. Once you've done that, it's back to another bit of flying. And that's the game, aside from a small section at the end where you have to land the rocket on the moon. Not much to it, is there?

And that's the real problem. The graphics are brilliant. They really capture the atmosphere of the cartoon strips, with excellent use of colour and high resolution sprites, though the animation is a little bit on the dodgy side. The sound effects are great too. Lots of spot FX and Snowy's bark is brilliant.

Playability is awful. On the flying section, it's almost impossible to judge where the rocks and pods are going, let alone catch or avoid them, whatever the case may be. On the second section, Tintin walks very fast and in very big steps, which makes accurate control a little difficult. Also, just while you're looking for a fire extinguisher, Boris will start a whole forest load elsewhere on the ship. Boris himself is far too much of a problem. In the way that you can't hurt him, yet he can shoot you, stomp on you, any damn thing he wants to.

Tintin could have been great, the designers had a lot of potential to play around with. Once again, potential has been wasted.

● Tony Dillon.



◀ Oh dear, a fire has been started on board, and Tintin has forgotten to collect the fire extinguisher.



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As you can see, the graphics don't do justice to the machine; the soundtracks are equally poor.

SHINOBI

Is VIRGIN's beat-em-up just a load of nunchukkas?*

AS a coin-op, *Shinobi* was no great shakes. It didn't do much to further the beat 'em up genre, and it didn't boast brilliant graphics, sound or action. Even so, it was good fun; and it didn't seem that difficult a task to convert it. What the 16-bit versions got to offer?

The scenario runs like this. On your graduation day from a secret oriental ninja school, Bwah Foo - a former pupil gone to the bad - turns up. With a flash of dark ninja magic he freezes you and spirits away the entire junior class.

Not someone you'd call a complete loony to his face, he issues you a challenge: give him all the school's gold or it's lights out for the kiddies. Unluckily, the school has recently used up all the gold it had; so it's up to you to don those ninja slippers, firmly grab hold of your shurikens and set off.

As the deadline for the ransom is arriving, you find Bwah Foo's hideout. The action's divided up into five missions, each containing three

or four multiloaded stages, packed with Bwah's henchmen - gun-toting orientals, ninjas, people who look like Spiderman, and the shield-carrying guards. You'll also find several captives: the number you've got to release on a particular stage is shown in the bottom left hand corner. Once you've freed them all, you can move onto the next.

At the end of each mission you'll face a hefty boss, who's usually about ten times

tougher than anyone you've faced on the level so far. Getting killed by him/it is pretty easy, so you'll be grateful for a couple of continue options.

Each stage is set against a time limit - if you complete it within the time, your remaining seconds are converted into bonus points. You can also get points and extra power-up weapons (for example, a pistol) for rescuing the cute little ninja kiddies. Pressing the spacebar activates your ninja magic - your man goes crazy, unleashes some smoke trails and splits into many parts. It works a bit like a smart bomb.

If you like the coin-op, you won't favour these conversions much. They're visually and aurally very poor, and the control method is a bit awkward. The nunchukkas are going to fly if we get any more like this!

AMIGA VERSION

The first thing you notice is a droning tune, followed by some horrible graphics. The badly-animated and blotchy sprites seem to slide along the ground; the backdrops are very poorly coloured and the scrolling is jerky. You can get some fun for a while, but not much.

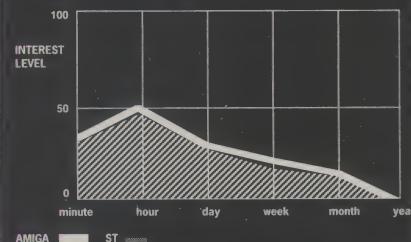
GRAPHICS	3	IQ FACTOR	2
AUDIO	3	FUN FACTOR	4
ACE RATING 392			

ST VERSION

Like the Amiga, except that the character jumps a little more slowly, which makes accurate control difficult. A very poor program which captures little of the coin-op's addictive, if simple, gameplay.

GRAPHICS	3	IQ FACTOR	2
AUDIO	3	FUN FACTOR	4
ACE RATING 385			

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



A bit depressing, eh? Not really much one can say, apart from avoid...

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UNTOUCHABLES

EASY TOUCH FOR OCEAN

THE Untouchables was the film that finally secured Sean Connery's position in the Hollywood league of super stars - and not before time. It's totally brilliant, out on video, and worth £1.50 of anyone's money. But the main point about it is that it provides excellent material for a computer game - And - surprise, surprise - Ocean have the rights to the computer game.

The game follows the plot of the film closely - unlike their other current film licence (ACE-rated in these very pages) Batman, which picks up on just a few of the more action-packed sequences. Say what you like about licenses - they may be a license to print money, but if they were all produced to Ocean's standards we'd probably be happy to spend it.

The Untouchables casts you as Eliot Ness, leader of the crack team sent to a warehouse where you have to find ten pieces of evidence concerning the illegal bootlegging of booze.

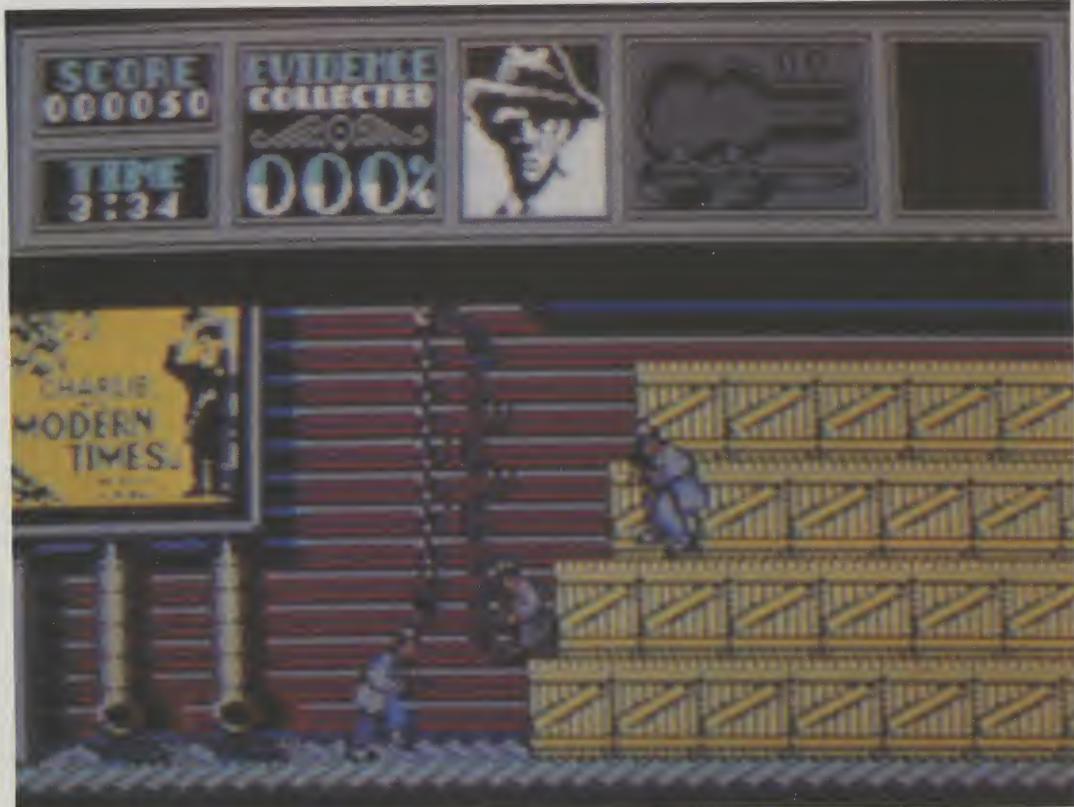
Succeed in this level and you soon get down to some serious shoot 'em up aggro with heavy Capone types as the game reproduces the famous bridge shoot out scene from the film. The screen scrolls horizontally from left to right in this section, as you attempt to pick off the criminals hiding behind cars with your telescopic gun sights.

If you survive this one then it's time to set up a 'meet'. A railway station is chosen but of course it's a double cross. Ness reaches for his 38, or rather you do it all for him through the medium of your joystick.

If your joystick and Ness do make it to the station then you get to play a starring role in yet another famous shoot out - one of celluloid's greatest moments of combat that rivals any scene you'd care to mention from recent releases - including Die Hard. Capone's men have a hostage in this scene - so only a crack shot can win the game with 'dead eye' precision on that famous '38. The game concludes with Ness shooting it out with a bunch of hoodlums on city rooftop.

We were hoping to receive a reviewable version of The Untouchables for this issue, but the software was delayed at the last moment so don't expect to see the game on the shelves until late October - we'll send the ACE boys round to give it a hard time, and you the review, next month.

Meanwhile, Ocean have a 'certain other



film licence' with which they intend to extract a few Bat-bob out of you before they launch The Untouchables. If the latter is as good as the Holy Game of Gotham, then it'll be worth waiting for.

The untouchables earned their name because they couldn't be bought off by the Mob. When it comes to film licences for games a certain Manchester software house are pretty untouchable themselves.



The illegal liquor factory scene on the Spectrum. Eliot Ness and his men are about to break up the party. Al Capone isn't going to like it.

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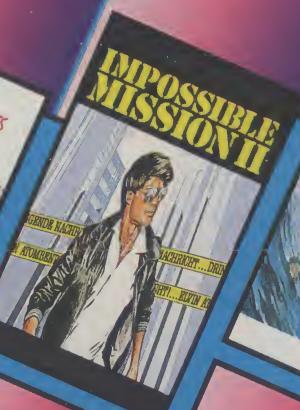
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DAY OF THE VIPER

ACCOLADE attempt to revitalise 3D maze games.

WAY back in the days of the good old ZX81, when the computer entertainment industry was still in its infancy, a software designer by the name of Malcolm Evans wrote the best game ever to appear for that machine. It was called *3D Monster Maze*, and was set, not surprisingly, inside a large maze with two inhabitants: You, and a rather hungry Tyrannosaurus Rex.

Despite the primitive graphics of that early Sinclair machine, and the fairly limited gameplay, the game managed to generate a superb atmosphere that kept me, amongst others, coming back to the game again and again.

Now, eight years later, on a machine many times more sophisticated than the ZX81, Accolade have produced another 3D maze game.

Although Accolade's offering is more colourful, more complex, bigger, more varied, and faster, in essence the gameplay has much the same appeal, and the same shortcomings.

The story behind *Day of the Viper* centres around a fairly important chappie known as GAR (Genetic Android Race). GAR was created as a prototype artificial man who could be given all the boring dirty jobs that nobody else wanted to do, and would never complain about them. GAR was at first a great success, but very soon began to experience Neurosynthetic melding; the robot equivalent of a bad migraine. This did not make him too enamoured of his creators, so he decided to get his own back and spawned an unstoppable robot army.

Now GAR and his metal minions rather cutely called GAR-goyles (groan!), have taken over the Sun League Defence Force Base Complex (a situation somewhat akin to Colonel Gadaffi overrunning the Pentagon).

Obviously something has to be done. The Sun League realise in the typical fashion of governments that their space fleet isn't really up to the task of ridding the galaxy of this latest Frankenstein's monster so they cast around for an alternative solution.

Fortunately for mankind there is an answer: the Nexus Project. The project involved the creation of the Vipers – powerful attack androids operated remotely by highly trained human operators.

Your job is to remotely control a Viper unit

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to infiltrate the base and reactivate the defence computer. (It's amazing what you can do with a humble ST isn't it?) This is the only way to destroy GAR and his buddies and prevent him from wiping out humanity.

The Viper craft displays show two monitors and a number of icons. The right-hand monitor is the most important as this shows a 3D view of the maze in front of you, as well as the pointer for manipulating objects, and gunsights (when your weapon systems are activated). The left-hand monitor toggles between various other displays.

The most useful of your status displays is a plotter which makes a map for you as you explore. A very welcome feature in a maze game! There are also other navigation aids like floor coordinates (which can be recorded at strategic points for later reference), and a heading indicator. All these items are quite essential since the corridors on all the floors are exactly the same shade of dull; identical in almost every respect.

You also have to hand various other items of equipment to assist you in your quest. Each of these is powered by a different component on your circuit board. These can be destroyed if you sustain too much damage. You will then have to hunt for replacement components to regain use of the equipment that has been affected.

Damage is incurred by stepping on mines or encountering GAR's evil buddies. These malevolent contraptions have a nasty habit of sneaking up on you from behind and firing away while you are still in the process of turning. Getting rid of them can also be a bit tricky since most of your adversaries must be hit in specific places if they are to be destroyed.

Before you can enter any of the rooms on a level you have to find the appropriate access cards. These are colour coded (as of course are all self respecting 24th century access cards). Many of the rooms are vacant, but others have specific purposes, such as repair rooms, communication rooms, power rooms, security rooms, and so on.

Before you can make use of the facilities

available in any room, however, you must possess the appropriate piece of equipment for use in that room. For instance, you require a communication module.

These items are scattered about the complex and can be collected and placed in your ten storage compartments until required. There are also other goodies to be found lying about in corridors, including power restorers, and damage repair pods.

One ingenious and very useful aspect to the game is the use of the right mouse button. By pointing to any object in the game and clicking the right button your message window will identify the object for you. This is extremely handy when you come into a room that appears to be full of interesting items only to be informed by your message window that it is in fact vacant or empty. Just think of the fruitless minutes trying to manipulate background graphics that you have been spared.

Each floor takes a fair time to explore, so when you consider that there are five buildings, each with five floors, you realise that you are not going to finish this game in a single evening. This wouldn't be so bad if the exploration of floors was a little more interesting.

Getting from floor to floor is achieved using the lifts. Finding the location of the shaft in each building is no easy task, so you will have to explore at least one floor of each building thoroughly before you can progress. To move from building to building you must locate the shuttle, which is another tedious affair.

While *Day of the Viper* is a brave attempt to revitalise a hackneyed idea, it doesn't really add enough to the tedious process of exploring the mazes to make it enjoyable. Once you have been wandering around for a while you will begin to get bored with the same old unchanging view of the complex through your monitor. Even the collectable objects don't inject much variety.

No doubt, players who persevere with the game and manage to progress to the later stages will be suitably rewarded with more interesting gameplay, but there is not really enough variety in the early stages of the game

to sustain interest for long. The problem is that all of the locations look the same or very similar, so once you have seen one floor, you've seen them all.

The game reminds me a great deal of *Short Circuit 1* which was another potentially good piece of software, spoilt by unimaginative and unvaried graphics. For my money Viper is too much like those old 3D maze games to have any real appeal.

• Laurence Scotford

ATARI ST VERSION

Neither the graphics or sound on this game really stretch the ST, and the gameplay is very much 8-bit. Having said that, there is a game in the somewhere if you are prepared to persevere. Decidedly average.

GRAPHICS 6 IQ FACTOR 7

AUDIO 6 FUN FACTOR 6

ACE RATING 625

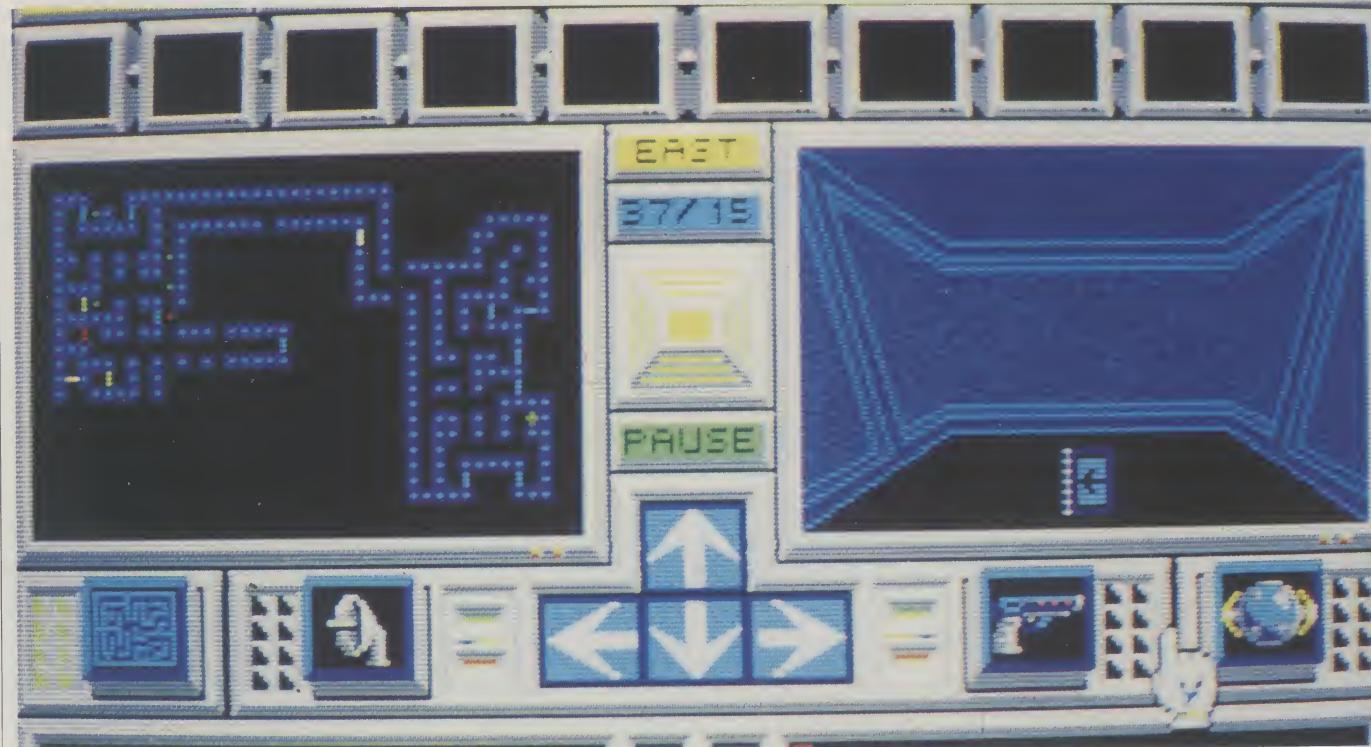
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PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Will probably get better the further you get, but how many people will stick with it?



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Strongman faces the first incarnation of the evil Lord of the Underworld, Nelf, abductor of the Goddess Athena.

ALTERED BEAST

The forces of darkness have gathered together, and Nelf, Lord of the Underworld has captured the goddess Athena. Zeus, who's more or less the top dog in the pantheon, decides that the only way to deal with the bothersome Nelf is to raise a brave and fearless warrior from the grave and endow him with supernatural powers.

This is where you come in. You are quietly rotting away in your grave when Zeus comes along, revives you, and commands you to save his daughter. You begin as Strongman, and have a fairly limited repertoire of attacking moves. These are executed in the time-honoured tradition of beat-em-ups, by using various combinations of joystick movements and the fire button to achieve punches, kicks and jumps.

Your opponents, the minions of Nelf, have

Activision
present Sega's
Beast of a game
unaltered...

a number of different methods of attack, the most odd being that employed by the jumping rock creatures. If you fail to dispatch these quickly they will completely envelop your head, causing death if you fail to shake them off quickly.

Most of Nelf's creatures can be destroyed easily once you have learned the best technique for dealing with them. For instance, the majority of your oppo-

nents on the first level can be put out of action safely by delivering punches or sweeping kicks from a crouched position.

Some of the creatures, when destroyed, deposit a mystical globe. If you collect this before it disappears off the edge of the screen, you are awarded extra powers. The extra power is most likely to be a power punch. This gives your punches and kicks an added boost.

Occasionally the globe causes you to be

transformed into a type of beast with greater powers than Strongman. The extra powers you gain in your transformed state are pretty well essential when you come to the end of a level. Here you meet an incarnation of the evil Nelf himself, which differs on every stage. He takes quite a bit of battering before he disappears off to the next stage, and while you are trying to dispatch him you are bombarded by a barrage of nasties, intent on your destruction.

If you do manage to complete a level you are, unfortunately, deprived of any powers you may have gained before you continue. This means that you begin each stage as Strongman with no power punches, and you must build up extra powers again during that level.

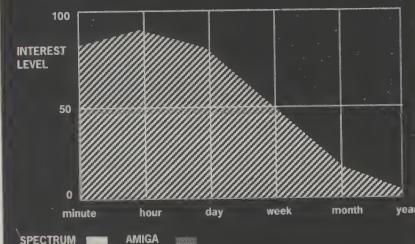
The original Sega coin-op was admittedly not the most stunning game to have emerged from the company recently, but it did have the virtue of being very playable and not too difficult to get into. This first class conversion shares the same qualities. It certainly doesn't break any new ground, but both graphics and sound are very competent, and the gameplay is superb.

The game is probably at its best when the two-player option is selected, but if you play on your own you should still find yourself making some headway after a little practise.

If you don't like beat-em-ups then there is not much here to interest you. If you enjoyed the arcade original, however, then you will not be disappointed by Activision's effective conversion.

● Laurence Scotford

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



A good conversion but you will probably get bored of it quite quickly.

RELEASE BOX

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AMIGA VERSION

There is nothing here that really stretches the Amiga, but it is a good game nevertheless. In terms of gameplay it has the edge over the similar Shadow of the Beast from Psygnosis, although the latter has superior audio-visuals. Definitely a good buy if you like this sort of thing.

GRAPHICS 7 IQ FACTOR 3

AUDIO 6 FUN FACTOR 8

ACE RATING 825

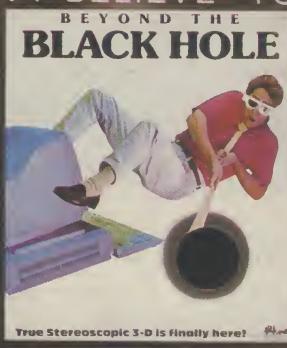
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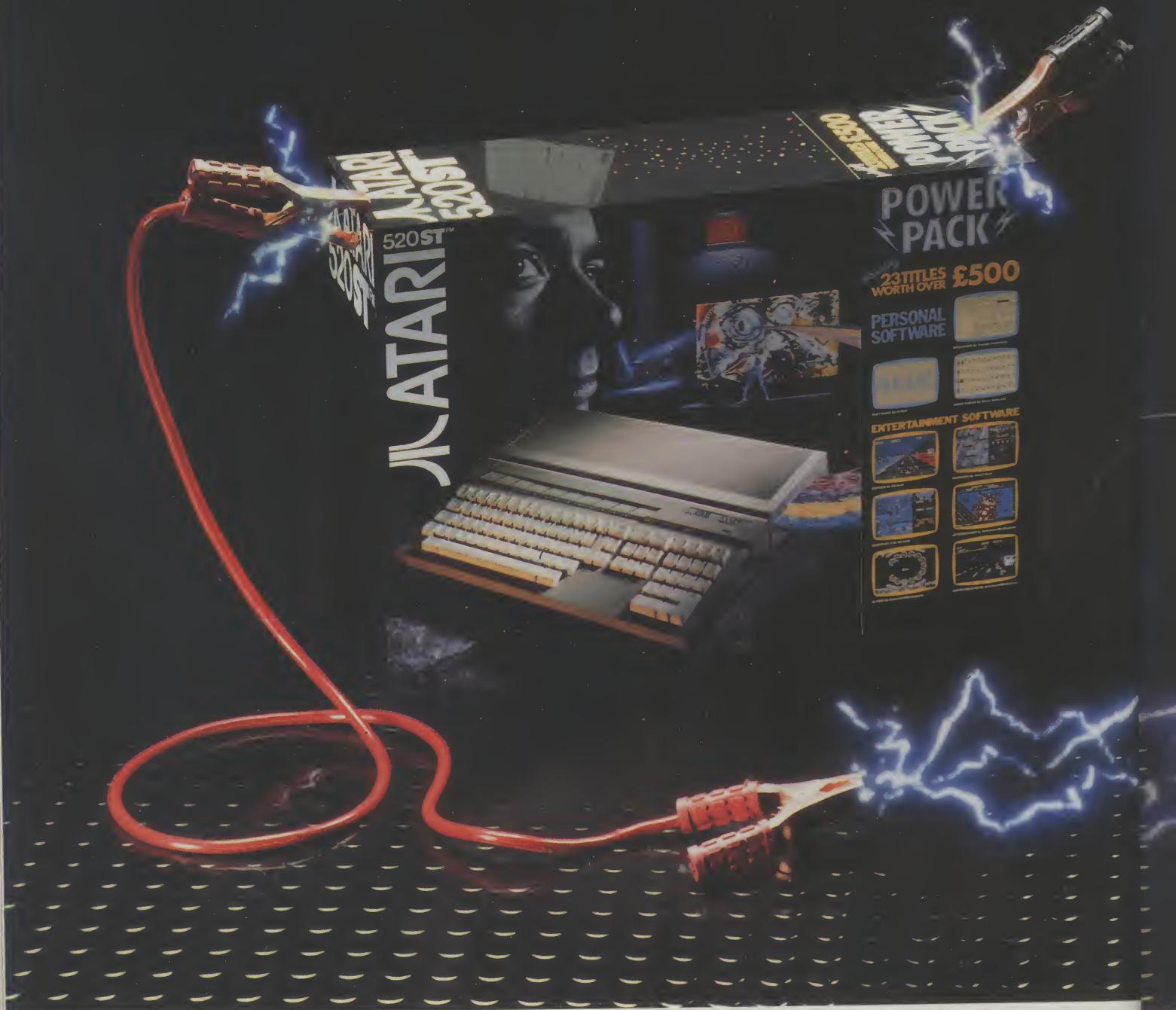
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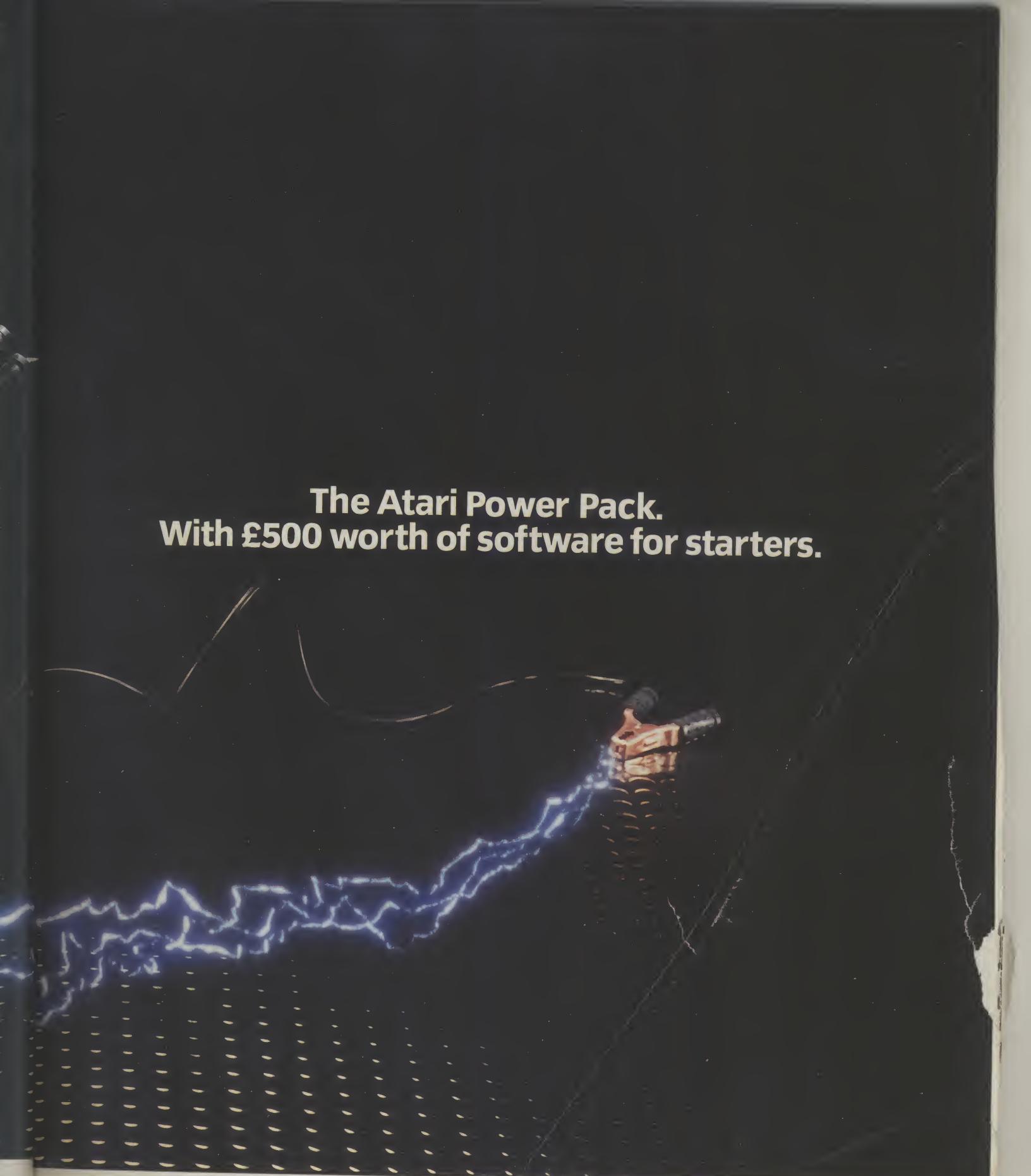
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RAINBOW WARRIOR

WITHOUT a shadow of a doubt *Rainbow Warrior* is the bravest and most adventurous software launch of 1989. This is especially true when the firm behind the product is Microprose, a company renowned for its military simulations, rather than games that actively discourage violent action in favour of peaceful lobbying on environmental issues.

The intention behind *Rainbow Warrior* is to inform while entertaining. The game is divided into six mini games, each of which represents a different campaign. These can be played in any order, but they must all be completed before you can play the final game, *Free the Spirit of the Rainbow Warrior*.

Campaign I: Radioactive Waste simulates the prevention of the discharge of radioactive waste at sea. You control a dolphin and must guide a diver down to four pipelines which he then blocks. The route to each of the pipelines is infested by a number of hazards, including nets and mutated sea creatures, which have

Microprose leave tanks and planes behind and get Environment Friendly



various detrimental effects if the dolphin or diver comes into contact with them. The general appearance of the game is very similar to the ancient *Scuba Dive* from Durrell Software. Unfortunately it lacks the latter program's playability, and the resulting game is frustratingly boring.

Campaign II: Ocean Dumping of Nuclear Waste requires you to clamber aboard the dumping ship 'Gem' and climb to the top of the three dumping cranes thus disabling them. The crew of the dumping ship attempt to prevent you doing this by spraying you with a hose, or throwing things at you. They also patrol the deck and will throw you overboard if they catch you. The game is so easy that it is hardly worth playing. Indeed I would be surprised to learn of anybody failing to complete it on their first attempt.

Campaign III: Save the Whale is easily the best of the bunch. You control a killer whale

Breakout revitalised by a killer whale

Shades of Scuba Dive but with none of the playability.

which moves left and right beneath a picture of the Greenpeace 'Save the Whale' poster. By firing balls of water at the poster you cause parts of it to appear. Meanwhile various objects traverse the screen. Some of these will begin to hide the poster again if you hit them, while others will help you out by revealing large sections of poster or awarding you high power super balls. While this mini game has more playability than all the other games put together, it is still very easy.

Campaign IV: Stop Acid Rain is based upon a Greenpeace demonstration in 1984 in which climbers successfully hung 'Stop Acid Rain' banners on several offending chimneys across Europe. In this simulation you must collect the individual letters of the phrase 'Stop Acid Rain' from passing inflatables, and hang them from the correct chimney. A workman, policeman, and occasional trucks are all hazards which must be avoided if you are to succeed. The collection and deposit of banners in the correct places is a miserably tedious affair, and you soon begin to look forward to being run over by the truck rather than have to endure seeing the game through to the end.

Campaign V: Stop Ozone Depletion would be hilarious if it wasn't so pathetically simple. Your task is to prevent the depletion of the ozone layer by throwing snowballs at attacking aerosol cans. If the cans manage to destroy all the ozone in one particular spot a radioactive ray appears which you must then avoid. This ray also affects the normally docile penguins who develop a sudden lust for blood. The sight of the red killer penguins bouncing with murderous intent towards the campaigner had me in stitches, especially when I discovered that they could be deterred by a landing a cold snowball on the beak!

Campaign VI: Save the Seals from Culling has you leaping between ice floes armed with a can of spray-on-dye (CFC free one hopes), in an attempt to save the baby seals from the hunters. Despite frequent attempts, I repeatedly failed to spray the seals. Either I was missing the point of the game or it is completely unplayable; given the evidence of the previous games, I suspect the latter.

The final game **Campaign VII: Free the Spirit of the Rainbow Warrior** will not, I feel, be played by many. The onerous task of battling through the six boring and unplayable mini-games in order to qualify is likely to prove too much for all but the hardest games players.

Rainbow Warrior is sadly a wasted opportunity. While it is a game that breaks the mould and branches into territory that has been previously ignored by both software houses and games players, all it is likely to succeed in doing is discouraging any similar attempt in the future. I cannot fault the graphics, sound, or general presentation. I thoroughly commend the concepts and philosophy behind the game. But, as much as I would like to, I cannot honestly recommend this product to anybody. Too little thought has been given to playability, and in consequence a potentially exciting and unique game has been ruined.

The only inspiring aspect of the product is the manual. This contains fascinating accounts of the Greenpeace campaigns that the games are based on, and even then most of this infor-



Watch out for the killer penguins!

mation has been lifted from *The Greenpeace Story* by John May and Michael Brown.

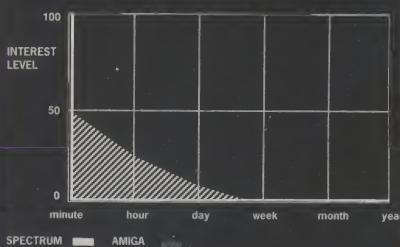
If you really want to learn about and support Greenpeace then you are better off not buying this game and sending the money directly to the organisation instead. Do otherwise, and you are sure to be disappointed.

● Laurence Scottford

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PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Will be played once, then filed in the bin.

ATARI ST VERSION

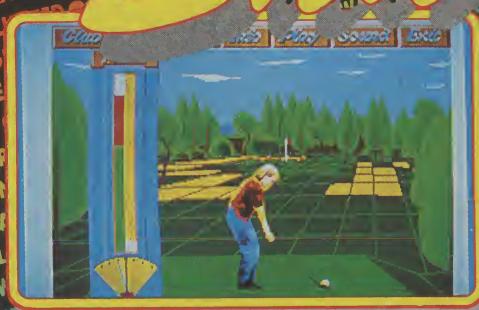
The graphics and general presentation are very nice, and the game plays rather pleasant dittys which change with each sub-game, but the whole thing is extremely unplayable. Definitely not recommended. Go and join Greenpeace instead!

GRAPHICS 7 IQ FACTOR 4

AUDIO 7 FUN FACTOR 1

ACE RATING 425

Can you survive the Shark Attack?



Greg Norman's ULTIMATE GOLF



Screen shots from various formats.

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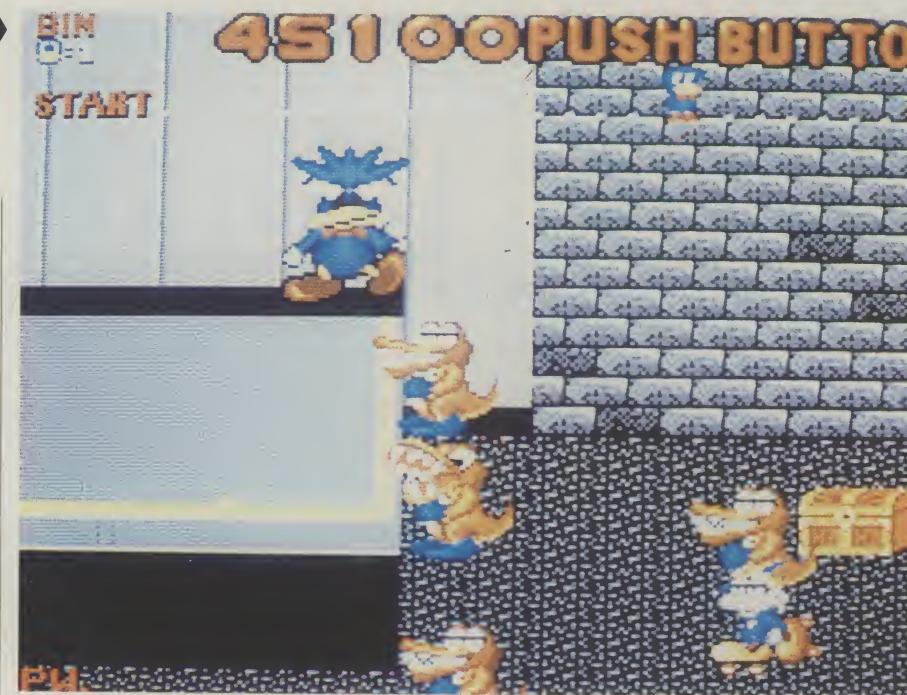
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Greg Norman
"The Great White Shark"

You've got plenty of choice among the baddies you can beat up. If you don't like the moose-heads or the boxing crocodiles, you can always pick on giant bouncing bunnies or manic moles

DUCKS - who can resist them? Lucy certainly couldn't, before she got kidnapped by the evil Achacha The Great, that is. There she was, gaily gambolling and frolicking with her feathered friends, Bin and Pin (the dux), when suddenly a great black shadow appeared, trapped her in a miracle ball and whisked her off to Achacha. Now, no self-respecting web-footed creature would refuse the chance to rescue her, would it?

This is where you take over, guiding Bin (with a friend able to play Pin) through the six very cute (but dangerous) scrolling lands of Achacha. These are evil places filled with all manner of awesome creatures: moose-heads, dog-heads, bouncing bunnies, roaring boxer crocodiles, cows on clouds, Sumo pigs trundling around on trolleys - and that's just for starters! At the middle and end of each land



DYNAMITE DUX

you've got to do battle with some heavyweight nasties. For example, in the jungle you'll fight a huge rock-man, and in Japan a dragon and an angry weather-formation.

To help you progress, you're adept in the art of biffing nasties on the nose. There are two basic combat moves: punching, which gets rid of most opponents straight away, and a mega-punch, caused by holding down the firebutton, which puts the wind up larger enemies. Luckily, there are also weapons lying around which keep you armed to the hilt: a rocket-launcher, guided missile gun, flamethrower, rocks, bombs and water pistols. The biggest is not always the best in some situations...

You can fire and fight in eight directions - useful, because some enemies turn round and try to bite you, or sneak up from behind. All weapons, however, have a limited lifespan, as shown at the bottom of the screen. The ducks have a similar power meter for each of their four lives; when these lives run out, you've an option to continue for three more credits; otherwise it's apple sauce time for our web-footed friends.

A conversion of an obscure coin-op, *Dynamite Dux* is excellent fun to play. It can be frustrating when you're on your own and you keep getting mashed by an end-of-level opponent because you haven't got the firepower, but that's the only niggle. If you like your action cute and feathery, this is the game for you.

● Gordon Houghton

ACTIVISION'S cute coin-op conversion involves a very silly mix of beat-em-up and shoot-em-up action - but does it fit the bill?



There are two big nasties on each level. The first one, half way through, is tough; the second, at the end, can only be tackled by real hard ducks

AMIGA VERSION

With colourful, cartoonish graphics and a series of brilliant soundtracks to accompany each level, all you need is appealing and challenging gameplay to keep you hooked. The Amiga version has all these qualities - so take a look!

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	3
AUDIO	8	FUN FACTOR	9
ACE RATING 842			

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PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



A typical addictive cutie, with high initial satisfaction giving way to lower, but more long-term addiction.

INFESTATION



INFESTATION

Are you ready for a new level of realism in computer games? Are you prepared for an atmospheric experience you will never forget? Can you cope with super-fast solid 3D vector graphics? Will you venture into the unknown, alone, and armed only with a single pulse rifle? Can you overcome the INFESTATION?

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Your task as Kal Solar, Agent of the Interplanetary Federation, is to travel to Alpha II, investigate and end the alien threat. Your mission will not be an easy one. As well as the mother alien and its eggs, you will have to deal with hostile droids and computer systems, radioactive areas, and things unknown.

INFESTATION is a truly atmospheric experience. Don't play this game when you're alone . . . it may well be your last!

Screen Shots from the Atari ST version AMIGA/ATARI ST £24.95

PSYGNOSIS - GAMES PEOPLE PLAY



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LAPTOP CHESS

ALL you businessmen on the move are really sick and tired of playing with your spreadsheets on train or plane or in the car. What you really want to do is have a game of chess on that swanky portable PC that the bosses have chained to you. At least, that's the theory behind *Laptop Chess*.

You might wonder why it's called *Laptop Chess* since, as far as I can see, it is actually the Cyrus Chess program for the PC from back in 1985-86. What makes it *Laptop* is, of course, the support for portable displays. You can, of course, use it on any PC compatible as well.

The display is reasonable enough with clear, if not elegantly designed, pieces. You can toggle between 3D and 2D views simply by pressing T, but you'll doubtless prefer – as with any chess program on any computer – to play with the overhead view.

As far as the portable displays the machine is specifically aimed at are concerned, we've only been able to test it on an Amstrad PPC640 – a screen that is not the classiest in the world by a very long shot. In 3D mode *Laptop* was virtually unplayable, and even in 2D it was hard to spot the marker indicating the piece you wanted to move. Otherwise it was fine, with no problems (and no excuses) in distinguishing black and white pieces. On screens superior to the Amstrad's, the game should

MINDSCAPE's
mind game on the
move

look pretty good no matter what dimension you choose to play.

Most of the features you would want are available in the program, although there are several points that betray its age. There is no option for the computer to suggest a move to the player, and there is no information in the program or in the simple (laptop?) manual as to the strength or response time of the game's 16 playing levels.

Strength is difficult to assess, but it's fairly safe to say that at levels up to 3 or 4, *Laptop* does not play a scintillating game. Thereafter it gets stronger, but the response times grow. As a terribly busy businessman or woman you'll have to decide whether you prefer strength or speed.

● Pete Connor

RELEASE BOX

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THE MASTER'S VOICE

We'll be introducing a special chess rating system in ACE in the very near future. In the meantime, should you get *Laptop Chess*?

It's certainly not the best version of chess around, nor is it the most attractive, but it should keep you happy on the train – and it may well be the only one you can use on certain portable displays.

If you're after a chess program for your portable, why not port it around to the shop and test the software out before buying?

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Battle it out on the track against other computer controlled rivals, such as, Dare Devil and Road Hog. Race and jump so fast that your car starts to break up under the strain and then accelerate even more. There's no prizes for being second best in this game – it's all or nothing.

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Stunt Car is utterly brilliant and offers adrenalin-pumping, gut wrenching high speed action that'll keep you engrossed for months. C + VG.



Stunt Car Racer is available for ST, Amiga, PC, Spectrum and Commodore 64

Micro Style



A typical end-of-level nasty. Note that for the bad guys as well as the good guys - two heads are better than one!

SCREEN SHOTS MAY VARY



As the title suggests, there is a simultaneous two-player option. This gives you the opportunity to either compete or cooperate with a friend. There are shades of *Blood Money* here, and like Psygnosis' game the pace of *Gemini Wing* does seem to be pitched for simultaneous play. If you're battling on your own you are going to have to work just a little bit harder to make much progress. But then the extra challenge will prevent this game being relegated to the back shelf too quickly.

You are armed with twin lasers, a fairly effective way of dispatching individual creatures, but not much use when you're surrounded by a screen full of malicious meanies with countless missiles homing in on you. Fortunately there are more useful weapons to be had. These come in the form of Gunballs, of which there are ten types, including extra weapons,

GEMINI WING

DIE Mutant Alien Scum' basically sums up the philosophy behind Virgin Mastertronic's latest contender in the shoot-em-up stakes. The alien hordes are a little upset because the SoonDay Spirit (which sounds suspiciously like a certain real Sunday rag) got a little carried away and published a galaxy wide edition carrying the aforementioned headline.

In consequence the proverbial little-green-men have decided to gang up on the inhabitants of the insignificant green and blue planet where all the trouble is coming from (and who can blame them?).

On any other day of the month this would have been... well, a bit of a disaster really, but fortunately for us Earth's good ol' weapon scientists have just put the finishing touches to the Gemini Wing project. This awesome system equips one or two fighters with an array of destructive weaponry ranging from the modest three-way fire ball to the overpowering wind-screen wiper of death. Frightening isn't it?

What this all adds up to is yet another excuse for a vertically scrolling, pulp the nasties, collect the nifty add-ons, and give the occasional end-of-level-guardians a nasty headache type affair. Sound familiar? Yes, you've seen it all before, so how does *Gemini Wing* compare to the rest of the shoot-em-up field?

RELEASE BOX

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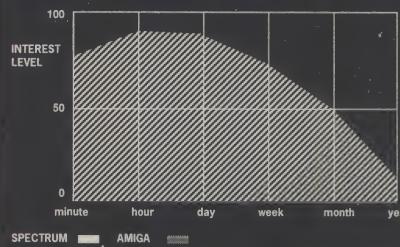
Nothing to complain about here - smooth scrolling, very nice graphics, and a varied soundtrack that is so good you actually want to keep listening to it rather than turn the volume down. Nothing new, but a very competent effort nonetheless.

GRAPHICS 7 IQ FACTOR 1

AUDIO 9 FUN FACTOR 8

ACE RATING 760

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



A reasonably entertaining blast - but there's not enough here to hold attention for long...

bonus points, a speed-up and an extra life. The Gunballs can be collected by shooting small clawed creatures or the larger 'Bringers'. These carry a tail of about eight Gunballs. By shooting at the alien you can cause the tail to cycle through the available options.

You can hold up to ten Gunballs at one time. The first three of these appear as a tail behind your fighter craft, while the remaining seven are shown in a little window to the side of the screen. If you are having a particularly bad time you can always steal the other player's Gunballs by flying through his tail, and give him a bad time instead (shame on you).

The first Gunball in the tail is activated by holding down and then releasing fire. It is quite gratifying to release a fire wall just as a whole horde of unsuspecting aliens are shooting down the screen towards you. It can be very frustrating though when you have a juicy spiralling circle of death about fifth in line, and four bonus point Gunballs to get rid of before you can use it.

The graphics are quite nice, and the sprites varied and well-animated, but don't expect any *Xenon II* style parallax scrolling here. What really makes the game is the soundtrack which is neither as bland or as repetitive as standard shoot-em-up sonics. If you already have a reasonable selection of shoot-em-ups in your collection then *Gemini Wing* is not going to give you anything you haven't already got. But having said that if you want something with a simultaneous two-player option and you find *Blood Money* and US Gold's *Forgotten Worlds* a little too tricky, then you should certainly take a look at *Gemini Wing*.

● Laurence Scotford

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Never Mind is a unique combination of arcade action and mind numbing problem solving, and uses a clever blend of computer-generated and hand-crafted puzzles. Is your brain up to the most intriguing challenge of the decade? There's only one way to find out . . .

Screen Shots taken from the Amiga and PC Versions

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PSYCLASE

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GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

WHEN the original game of *Populous* was released earlier this year it scooped a massive ACE rating of '963 as well as numerous other accolades. What made *Populous* the most important game's release of 1989 (so far...) was its winning combination of originality, inventive graphics and sound, and superb playability.

The game casts you as a god whose objective is to aid your own people's development and hinder those owing allegiance to a rival deity. This is achieved by raising and lowering the landscape and inflicting various disasters on your enemies like floods, earthquakes and volcanoes.

By now there must be thousands of budding gods out there steadily conquering the hundreds of lands incorporated in the original game. But sooner or later even the slowest omnipotent beings are going to run out of new worlds to conquer: a situation likely to leave many *Populous* addicts suffering from severe withdrawal symptoms. But never fear, help is at hand in the form of *The Promised Lands*.

This latest release from Electronic Arts contains five new landscapes to revitalise those apprentice Olympians desperate for



Silly Land is an excuse for some 'cute' graphics; your little humanoids are replaced by grinning red and green monsters who build extremely weird houses.

The Bit Plains resemble a programmer's nightmare. The land is crumpled printer paper, strewn with cigarette butts, coffee mugs, and pencils. The buildings begin as small computers like Sinclair Spectrums and grow up into huge Cray supercomputers. Take a good look at the flags...

Not exactly a new release this, but certainly something for **POPULOUS** fans to get all worked up about... Get yourself a

THE PROMISED LANDS

another fix of quakes, volcanoes, and floods. The original game is loaded as normal, and then the new data disk is inserted once the game has begun. The landscapes that are played are the same as those in the original game, beginning with **GENESIS** and working through to **KI**... (that would be telling). But the scenarios **Grass Worlds**, **Ice Worlds**, **Fire Worlds**, and **Desert Worlds** have been replaced by five completely new world types to play on (or should that be prey on?). These are **Revolution Francaise**, **Silly Land**, **Wild West**, **Block Land**, and **the Bit Plains**.

Each of the new scenarios features new graphics for the land, water, people, and buildings, all of which are novel to say the least. So even though the initial shapes of the landscapes are the same they have a completely different appearance, and this cosmetic change alone goes a long way towards revitalising the game's interest.

The Promised Lands delivers more than different graphics though. You will notice that all

of the lands are a lot harder to conquer, and even on **GENESIS** the opposition seem to multiply at an alarming rate. So don't expect to find that just because you've already played the game you can easily overcome lands you are familiar with; it's a whole new challenge.

The Promised Lands is a little expensive for what amounts to a face lift for the original game, but it is still worth a look if you have exhausted the possibilities of the first set of landscapes but still enjoy playing *Populous*.

• Laurence Scottford

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ATARI ST	£9.99dk	OUT NOW
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Dual Format disk - works on both machines.		



The Wild West is a battle between Cowboys 'n' Injuns. They seem to have got their wires a bit crossed though as both sides begin the game in wigwams and end up in forts!

ALL FIRE

RUN THE GAUNTLET

"... apart from technical excellence, it's the sheer range of playable sections that makes Run the Gauntlet one of the best multi-event games ..." CRASH.



CREATIVE ACTION.

RAMBO III

"the graphics are of a high quality throughout ... equally impressive is the music ... Rambo III delivers fast action entertainment." COMPUTER GAMES WEEK.



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BUDS VS. DRAGONNINJA

"Dragonninja is fun to play ... well implemented and extremely addictive." ACE MAGAZINE



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ZZA"



DA

RED UP . . .

THE NEWZEALAND STORY

"Irresistible ... an arcade-perfect conversion" ZZAP SIZZLER - ZZAP 64. "A superb game in every respect. C+VG HIT - C+VG."



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RED HEAT

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AS a boardgame, *Pictionary* is quickly catching up with *Trivial Pursuit* in the Yuppie After Dinner game stakes. So it seems almost logical to release *Pictionary* the computer game as a follow-up to the most successful computer trivia game in the world.

Pictionary is, in easy terms, a cross between Snakes and Ladders without any snakes or ladders and Charades. The way the game works is like this. The computer draws a picture (or a human player does if you're playing with two teams or more) and you have to guess what word the drawing is trying to identify before you run out of time.

There is an option to 'hit the buzzer' while the picture is being drawn, but that might forfeit you a move. For example, the computer draws a hand and a section of the forearm. Player one buzzes in at this point and shouts out 'Hand'. Player two is much more intelligent. He sits back and waits for the drawing to be finished. Sure enough, the computer then draws an arrow pointing to the join between the hand and the forearm. The word is 'wrist'.

To win the game, you have to go all the way round the board and land on the End square first. By correctly guessing a *Pictionary* (by telling the computer you got it right, just as in *Trivial Pursuit*) the computer throws a dice and moves you along that number of squares. This reliance on honesty was one of the main objections to the computerised *Trivial Pursuit*,



Pictionary - not just a pretty Polly?

is just how imaginative it is. The computer drawings are both recognisable and varied, and sitting down and watching it draw is like having your very own episode of *Catchphrase*, minus the annoying Irish bloke.

A lot more fun than *Trivial Pursuit* was, and what's more you don't need to know everything about everything to play it.

• Tony Dillon

DOMARK

go doodling in a game with a built-in paint package that

PICTIONARY

so it's a pity that it's still here in this later release.

There are plenty of game options, including a large array of different player formations. You can play one, two, three or four players, where the computer draws all the pictures, or you can play two, three or four teams, where one member of each team has to draw the picture prompted by the computer.

The highlight of the game, and the most integral part of the program is the art package you have to use to doodle. Surprisingly enough, it's very good. Very easy to use, it's designed to be 'instant'. Everything you need is right in front of you. No sub menus, no hunting for the right tool. Even if you're not a dab hand with art packages, a few minutes on the Practice Draw option will have you putting down Mona Lisas (or Metallica logos, depending on taste) all over the shop.

After playing it for quite a while, both against a human opponent and against the computer, the most surprising thing I've found

AMIGA VERSION

Loads of colour, lots of varied pictures make the game visually interesting. Fun for two, but could get very dull playing solo. Nice three channel tune in the classical mould plays throughout.

GRAPHICS 8 IQ FACTOR 7

AUDIO 6 FUN FACTOR 7

ACE RATING 790

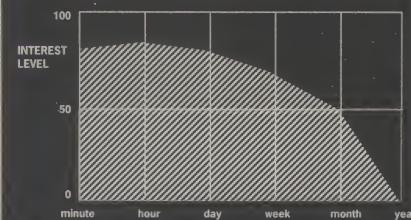
could challenge

Trivial Pursuit

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Sheer variety keeps you going, but even that palls in the end...

BLADE WARRIORTM



The beast was present in
the land and from tower
to tower the sorcerers
voice called upon him.
As night encroached and
set the sun to flight,
so his legions made ready
to conceal the tablets
that would see daylight
banished forever.



So, as the same last
bloody light drained
from east to west, the
paladin came forth, ready
to do battle against the
legions of the night,
using all his might and
skill in this tale of
swords and sorcery.



Screenshots from Amiga version



Atari ST, Amiga, IBM
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ACE AND PSYGNOSIS OFFER YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO SNAP UP SOME OF THE LATEST AND GREATEST GAMES FOR THE ST AND AMIGA.

COMPETITION

GAMES UP FOR GRABS

Get your grubby mitts on some great goodies from the guys at Psygnosis, and have a go at their recent gorgeous games.

If you read our feature on Liverpool based Psygnosis in the September issue you will know that the company is currently producing a whole host of amazing games for 16-bit machines.

The most recent release was the amazing *Shadow of the Beast* for the Amiga, reviewed in October. We were very impressed: graphically, the game pushes the machine further than anything seen before. But *Beast* is by no means the first Psygnosis release to astound press and public alike.

Ever since the launch of its first mega-game, *Brattacas*, Psygnosis have built a reputation for excellence in 16-bit games and are

particularly renowned for their quality graphics and sound.

With titles like *Barbarian*, *Baal*, and *Menace* already to their credit, Psygnosis are now set to release even more stunning games in the run up to Christmas, and we're giving you the chance to have six of them absolutely free.

The first five correct entries out of the editorial hat will receive copies of *Triad*, *Blood Money*, *Never Mind*, *Infestation*, *Matrix Marauders*, and *Stryx*. In addition Psygnosis are throwing in a Psygnosis T-Shirt and a *Beast* T-Shirt featuring the brilliant Roger Dean artwork.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS...

...read the six game descriptions below and decide which game matches which description. For instance, if you think that description 1 matches game A, your answer would be 1.A.

Mark your answers on the back of a postcard together with your name, address, and telephone number, and whether you would prefer to receive ST or Amiga versions of the games. Send your completed postcard to:

**ACE PSYGNOSIS COMP,
30-32 FARRINGDON LANE,
LONDON. EC1R 3AU.**

1. This fascinating isometric 3D game of strategy and quick thinking has you rearranging tiles to form pictures. Not as easy as it sounds when you have to contend with giant chess pieces, never mind the disappearing tiles and moving causeways...

2. As intergalactic agent Kal Solar, can you clear the infested space base of alien eggs and activate the nuclear power source before time runs out and the galaxy is overrun?

3. The aim of the game is to capture target hexes as you cruise above a huge grid in your fighter. But watch out for the marauding Hunters, Twisters, and Buzz Guns.

4. Three for the price of one in this mega value games compilation.

5. If cash is short, why not go on an Alien Safari and earn some extra dosh for bagging the baddies?

6. The cyborgs have run amok and the dome central committee are in hysterix. Only the top secret project alpha can save the day!

- A. TRIAD
- B. INFESTATION
- C. BLOOD MONEY
- D. STRYX
- E. MATRIX MARAUDERS
- F. NEVER MIND

Rules

1. The closing date for entries is November 2nd 1989.
2. Employees of EMAP or Psygnosis are not eligible for entry.
3. The editors decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.



20 QUESTIONS

YOUR CHANCE TO CHANGE THE WORLD AND WIN FREE SOFTWARE

We're looking for vital information about ACE readers. Your answers could win you £50 worth of free software for your machine and help us to bring you a better magazine...

ACE is growing bigger every day, but without you we wouldn't be going anywhere. Our main commitment is to provide our readers with exactly the magazine they're looking for and you can help us by ticking the boxes below and posting the form (a photocopy would be fine) to **20 Questions, ACE, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London, EC1R 3AU.**

And by way of saying thank you, we've got £50 worth of free software to hand out to each of the readers whose forms we pick at random from those received prior to November 10th 1989. So get your form in pronto!

1) Are you Male Female

2) How old are you?

Under 12 <input type="checkbox"/>	21-25 <input type="checkbox"/>
12-16 <input type="checkbox"/>	26-30 <input type="checkbox"/>
17-18 <input type="checkbox"/>	Over 30 <input type="checkbox"/>
19-20 <input type="checkbox"/>	

3) Are you:

A student In full-time employment
In part-time employment
None of the above

4) Is your annual income:

Below £5K <input type="checkbox"/>	£7.5K-10K <input type="checkbox"/>
£5K-7.5K <input type="checkbox"/>	£10K-15K <input type="checkbox"/>
Over £15K <input type="checkbox"/>	

5) Which of the following computers, if any, do you own or are likely to buy within the next 12 months.

	Own (don't use much)	Own (use regularly)	Planning to buy
Amiga	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C 64	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apple MaC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spectrum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amstrad CPC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Atari 800	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Atari VCS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amstrad PCW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC Compatible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nintendo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sega	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Atari ST	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: (please specify)			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6) Which of the following items do you own or are planning to buy?

	Own	Planning to buy
Modem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Printer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MIDI interface	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video camera	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Audio CD player	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video recorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Record deck	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35mm SLR camera	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Motorcycle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7) How many of these types of programs do you own?

	None	Under 5	5-10	More than 10
Simulation games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arcade games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adventure games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
War games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Role playing games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paint program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8) Do you buy usually buy your software from:

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Local Computer Shop	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woolworths	<input type="checkbox"/>	Newsagents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mail Order	<input type="checkbox"/>				

9) How much money do you spend on software each month?

Under £15	<input type="checkbox"/>	£15-25	<input type="checkbox"/>	£25-35	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than £35	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than £50	<input type="checkbox"/>		

10) How many other people have read or looked at this copy of ACE?

None	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 4	<input type="checkbox"/>								

11) Which of these other magazines do you read?

	Never	Occasionally	Often
Computer and Video Games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zzap 64	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Omni	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Popular Computing Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commodore User	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your Sinclair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crash	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The One	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amstrad Action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Computer Express	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Games Machine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Scientist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amiga Format	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ST Format	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ST Action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12) Rate the following articles/sections in this issue between 0 (not at all interesting) and 10 (very interesting)

News	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letters	<input type="checkbox"/>
Previews (pp 18/19)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arcades (pp 22/23)	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC Engine feature (pp 27/30)	<input type="checkbox"/>
David Braben feature (pp 35/37)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Horror feature (pp 41/44)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screen Test (pp 47/80)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Competition (p 85)

16-bit Racing game feature (pp 89-94)

Updates (pp 97/100)

Music (pp 103/104)

Tricks and Tactics (pp 107/110)

Beer Money Budget Software (pp 113/115)

Adventures (pp 107/110)

13) With regard to game reviews, would you like to see:

	Yes	No
More game reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less game reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fewer game reviews, concentrating on more important releases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Longer game reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More console game reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14) With regard to the following subjects, would you like to see:

	More coverage	Less coverage	No coverage at all
Hardware	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graphics software	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music and MIDI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adventures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New technology (not directly computer related, e.g. interactive video)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
News features	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ACE on the Road	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15) Which ITV region are you in (e.g. HTV, Anglia, Thames...)?

.....

16) Do you own a Filofax compatible personal organiser?

17) How often do you visit the arcades?

Never Occasionally Often

18) Apart from computer games, how much do you indulge in:

	Never	Occasionally	Often
Sport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cinema	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overseas travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19) Fill in the following information for the prize draw for £50 of free software:

My name and address:

20) If I win, I would like my software prize to be compatible with the

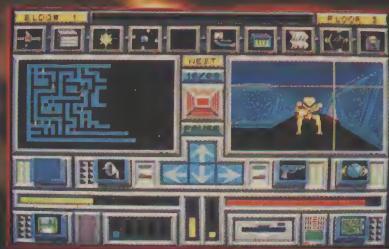
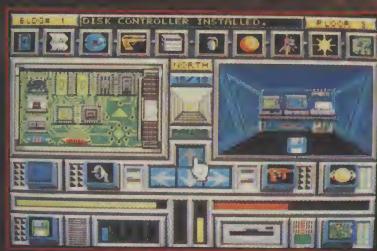
..... computer.

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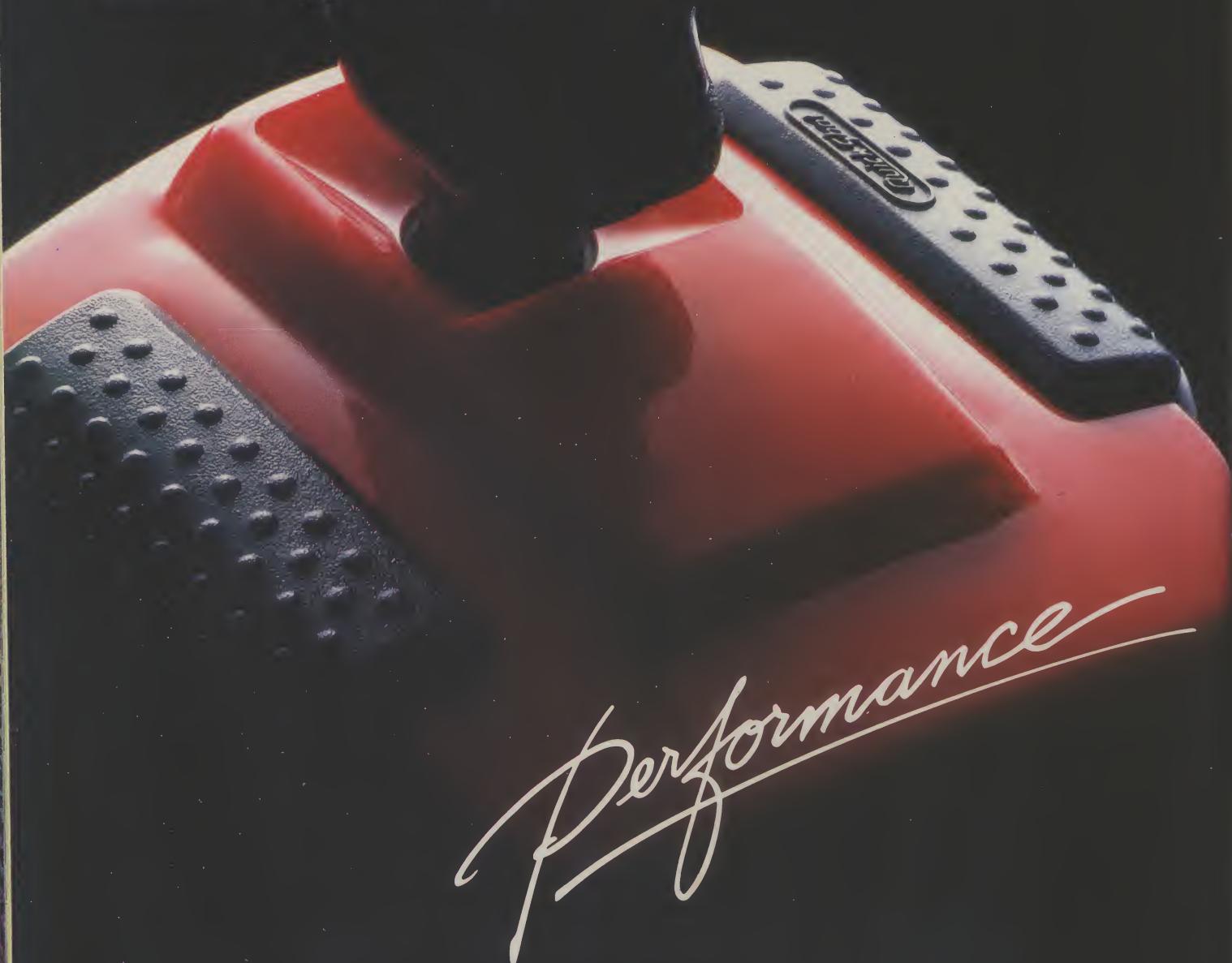
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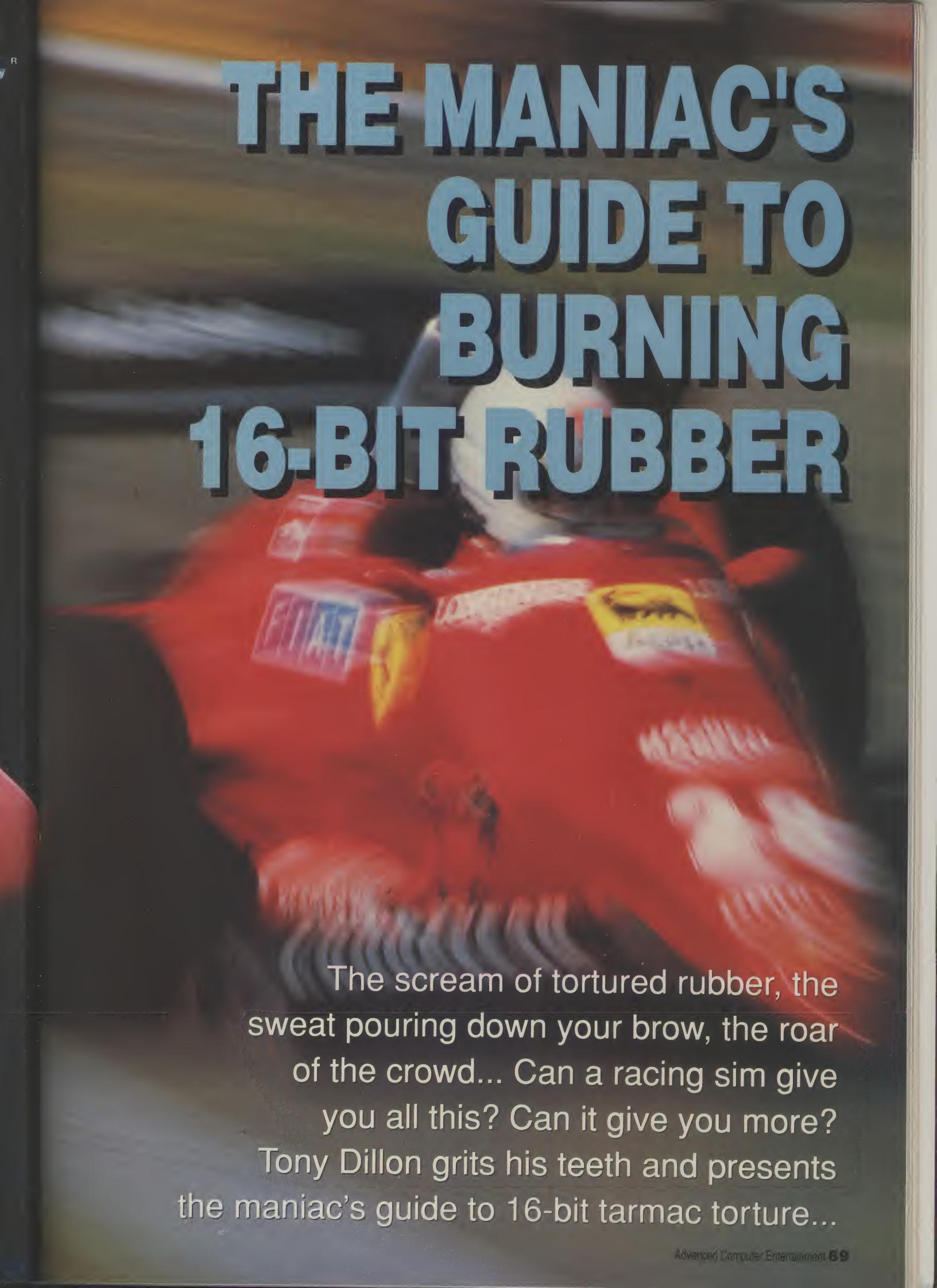
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THE MANIAC'S GUIDE TO BURNING 16-BIT RUBBER

A red Formula 1 race car is shown in motion on a track. The side of the car features a graphic of a man's face screaming with his mouth wide open. The car has a license plate that reads "F1 RACE". The background is a blurred view of the track and sky, suggesting speed.

The scream of tortured rubber, the sweat pouring down your brow, the roar of the crowd... Can a racing sim give you all this? Can it give you more?

Tony Dillon grits his teeth and presents the maniac's guide to 16-bit tarmac torture...



Driving games have always been popular, ever since the days when Atari's Pole Position first hit the streets, and gave the average man in the street a chance to try out every boy's fantasy. One or two enhancements have been made in the years since, however, and in comparison to today's arcade titles (Powerdrift, for example), Pole Position looks almost prehistoric. Even so, a landmark it was, one which led the way to one of the most popular forms of computer entertainment. But which one of its successors should you go for?

This month sees the appearance of two new additions to the computer racing family – Vette and Continental Circus. Vette arrived at ACE just too late to make it into this article, but you can check it out in Screen Test (see the Screen Test index on page 4 for its location). Before you check out the new contenders, why not drive off down memory lane and see if there are any second-hand models you could go for...

it's more than a little easy to fall off. The game is first-person perspective, with the outside world made up of really fast smooth filled vectors, and the impression of realism is unbelievable. Your stomach actually churns as you shoot off the edge of a jump into thin air, before plummeting earthward, hopefully onto another piece of track.

An amazing experience, and a clear winner. Where can things go from here?

anism. Rather than use the mouse to turn the steering wheel, you actually used the mouse to turn the driver's head, and the wheel would turn in kind. The more you turned your head, the more the wheel turned. The practicality of this meant that you could turn to look round a bend as you were turning it, giving you warning of any cars ahead and generally making the game more realistic. The sensitivity of the control made the car very hard to drive, but once you were used to it, you wondered why nobody else ever copied it. A true thoroughbred.



R.V.F.

Microprose

More Microprose racing, only this time it's on a bike. The champion in the Best Sprite Based Racing Game stakes, and a superb simulation, RVF put you, as a worthless little motor racer, into the world of performance bike racing on none other than the Honda RVF750, a limited build custom racer based around the best selling VFR750.

Detail was always one of Microprose's strong points, and there's no lack of it in RVF. Everything has been finely calculated, right down to the animation of the rider who turns his head to look over his shoulder at passing bikers, and after a crash runs the bike along the track before mounting and riding off into the sunset.

Brilliant graphics, brilliant sound, brilliant game.

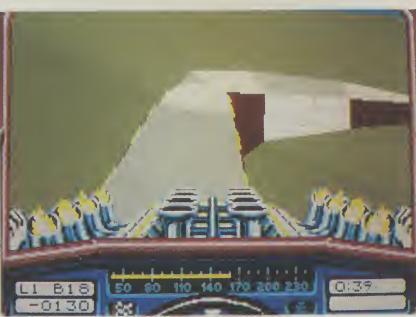
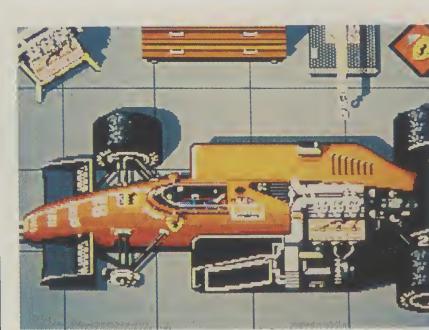


Super Hang On

Activision

Not so much a simulation as a perfect arcade conversion. Super Hang On was essentially Hang On with a few extra frills. For a start you could race one of four courses, each set in a different continent and ranging from Africa (Easy) to North America (Very Hard). Another great gameplay feature was the Nitro button. When your bike reached 280 KPH, you could inject Nitro into the engines to give the bike a little more kick, boosting it up to around 340 KPH, which is a stupid speed to try and take a corner at and usually results in people running out of road and flying A over T into the nearby grass.

The screen update, of both the road and the sprites, is perfect. The road itself is as smooth as the ACE Ad Manager on a date, and the hills are realistic enough to make you try and look over the crest of them. Great game, excellent conversion.



Stunt Car Racer

Microprose

After a lightning qualifying lap, Stunt Car takes up lead position on the starting grid and at the same time places itself in the annals of computer history as being one of the most amazing spectacles to watch, let alone play. The opponents are your good self and a computer pacer. The objective: do X number of laps on a track with the eventual aim of beating the computer. The track: a continuous loop of tarmac.

The strange thing is that the track is raised, at its lowest point some 25 feet from the ground, and all the tracks are full of treacherously steep climbs and dips. At high speeds,

Ferrari Formula One

Electronic Arts

A bit old this one, but still a game that was way ahead of its time to start with. Take the mouse in your hand and take the wheel of a Formula One Ferrari racer on some of the most famous racecourses in the world. It's all there, from qualifying laps and trophies, right down to windtunnels, where you can alter various settings on your car to improve the performance.

FF1 is noted for its unusual steering mech-



Lombard RAC Rally

Mandarin

Slip into the luxurious surroundings of a Ford Sierra RS Cosworth, and take part in what may not be a major racing event, but is still fun none the less.

Race through many types of terrain, such

as mountain or forest, and through many types of weather condition, such as fog or night. As you race the qualifying rallies, you can earn yourself money to improve your car, through either just finishing the course quickly or by making a TV appearance, where you are quizzed on the history of Rallying, as supplied with the game.

As you race, you take the unusual position of sitting behind yourself in the car, in which position you can clearly see the road ahead through the windscreen, as well as all the little driving movements you make, such as turning the wheel or changing gears. All this goes toward giving the game a nice atmosphere, and though the variety of gameplay may be a little low, it's still a game I'll be playing for a good while yet.



The Duel - Test Drive II

Accolade

Accolade tried to right all the Test Drive wrongs with The Duel, and to an extent they succeeded. Still keeping with the theme of illegal high speed performance car driving, either a Porsche 959 or a Ferrari F40, this time they added a bit more of a game to it rather than pointless A to B as fast as possible. This time you're in a race, either against the clock or a computer controlled driver, and you have to race first over leisurely flatland, then up into the treacherous mountain roads and then down again on the other side, all the time avoiding the general public and trying to stay ahead of the computer driver.

There's nothing serious about the game. It's just a lot of fun. It doesn't claim to be technically or visually accurate, but why should it? Also, fight those boredom blues with the Super-cars expansion disk, which gives you another five cars to play around with, and the California Challenge disk, which gives you a hair raising ride from the suburbs of California to the tip of Mexico.

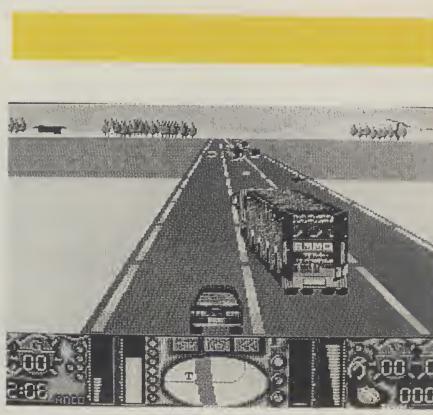


Grand Prix Circuit

Accolade

Very similar to the Test Drive series both in look and feel, GPC let you compete in a Formula One Championship with a car of your choice. Though not as technically brilliant as Ferrari Formula One, it is, as with Test Drive, great fun to play.

Graphics are quite limited, but what is there is well used. The other cars are very detailed and the update is surprisingly smooth. The lack of roadside objects is a bit surprising, but I don't think this was ever meant to be taken seriously anyway. As before, it's fun.



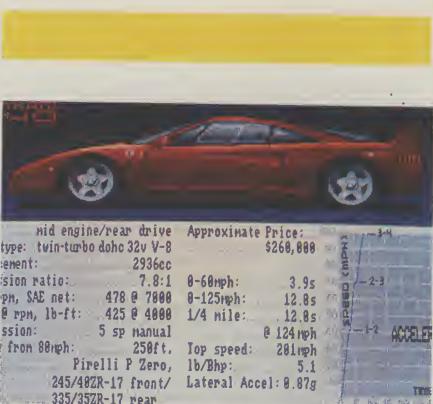
Highway Hawks

ANCO

HH is, in no uncertain terms, a clone of arcade favourite Road Blasters. It's just sad that it happened to be much better than the official conversion.

Steer your battle-axe Ford Cortina at stupid speeds down stretches of motorway deemed as 'dangerous'. As you race along over land and sometimes over sea, you meet various other vehicles. Trucks, when shot, can drop weapons and supplies, or just a hindrance or two. Other cars may drop fuel for you, or they may shoot at you. Whatever the case, all it takes is a quick squeeze of the trigger on your part and that's the last of them.

The road is incredibly smooth, as is all the in-game animation. Control response is fast and the action is well placed. This is how Roadblasters should have been.



Test Drive

Accolade

The original performance car game. Select one of five supercharged sports cars, and take them for a leisurely spin around a winding

mountain road. Avoid the police wherever possible and try not to hit other cars or fall off the road.

Great upon release, but looks a bit dated now. The screen update is appalling, which leads to almost no sensation of true speed, and the basic problem is that it's just too easy. That linked with the lack of variety makes the game short lived. Innovative though.



Roadblasters

US Gold

The logical follow up to Out Run in the arcade, and sponsored by toy giants Matchbox, Roadblasters had the same Behind-The-Car view as Out Run, only this time gave you a gun, so instead of avoiding the bad guys, you now got to take them out in a really satisfying way.

Sadly, 16 Bit Roadblasters almost totally fails to capture the spirit of the coin-op. It's slow, unplayable and generally a terrible conversion. A turkey.



Out Run

US Gold

Now this is a major turkey. The original arcade driving game, and also one of the biggest selling games of all time. Also one of the most disappointing conversions of all time. Almost unrecognisable from the coin op, the graphics are all garishly coloured and disgustingly blocky. The road update is so terrible there are times where you can't tell if the road is bending left or right and the sound is terrible.

One of the biggest foul-ups of all time.

Late starters.

And that's only the start. Soon to come are the conversions of Chase HQ and W.E.C. Le Mans from Ocean, filled vector arcade classic Hard Drivin' from Domark, Outrun Europa from US Gold and Powerdrift from Activision. Watch this space.

BALLISTIX



BALLISTIX

It's a whole new ball game!

Sick of silly old soccer? Tired of pathetic pinball? Then you need a dose of *Ballistix* – the fastest, wackiest, toughest ball game yet to appear on a computer. *Ballistix* just explodes with excitement, puzzles and an amazing 130 different screens of frenetic action, on the PC, Atari ST and Amiga. On the C64 version there are 64 screens.

The aim of the game is simple; score more goals than your opponent to win the match. Doing it is a different matter as **splitters** fill the screen with dozens of balls, **tunnels** hide them from view, **bumpers** bounce balls all over the show, fiendish **red arrows** speed them up to almost impossible velocity, **magnets** pull them away from your control, and much, much more.

Ballistix is incredibly flexible, too. You can play against the computer or another player, set the speed if you can't stand the pace, define where the balls are fired and their velocity, rack up bonuses that will get you extra goals and then, at the end of an exhausting game, set your name in pride of place on the high-score table. And it's all played to the accompaniment of a throbbing sound-track and a crowd that applauds your every goal.

Ballistix is definitely not a game for wimps. It's tough, fast, challenging and incredibly competitive – in fact, it's just the kind of game you like.

AMIGA/ATARI ST £19.95 PC £24.95 C64 DISK £12.99/CASS. £9.99

Screen Shots taken from the Amiga version

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PSYGNOSIS

UNCOOL CONTROL?

Joysticks just don't cut the mustard when it comes to racing sims – find out why, and what could replace them...

Remember the first time you sat in an original Outrun machine? Remember the realistic way the car responded to the slightest turn of the wheel? Remember pulling the wheel hard over to skid round one bend and then gently slipping round the next? Try doing the same thing with any of the computer conversions... You can't! And why not? Because compared to the sophisticated controls on the arcade machine your computer's joystick looks like a Robin Reliant next to a Porsche.

Ever since Atari established the standard protocol for joysticks on its consoles way back in the 70s, computer gamers have had to put up with a control that is about as sophisticated as a light switch. The problem is that the majority of computer joysticks are digital. They really only amount to five switches — four for the directions, up, down, left, and right, and one for the fire button. The advantage of this system is that, not only are the joysticks cheap



Bikers – Jez San's Konix game, to be bundled with the machine, makes good use of analogue control – the feel as you lean into the bends is far more realistic than it could be with a simple on/off digital joystick.

and easy to produce, it is also easy for the computer to read and use the signals generated by them.

Digital joysticks are fine for platform games or shoot-em-ups, but what happens



Jez San keeping an eye on one of his competitors' programs, running on the Konix at the launch of the console. Jez' game *Bikers* (see screenshot elsewhere) was one of the few games to make proper use of the analogue control potential of the Konix.

when you want to simulate a lap round Brands Hatch or a dogfight between an F-16 and a Mig? For these applications you need more sensitive control than just turn left or turn right, you also want to be able to control the speed of the turn. With a standard digital joystick this is just not possible.

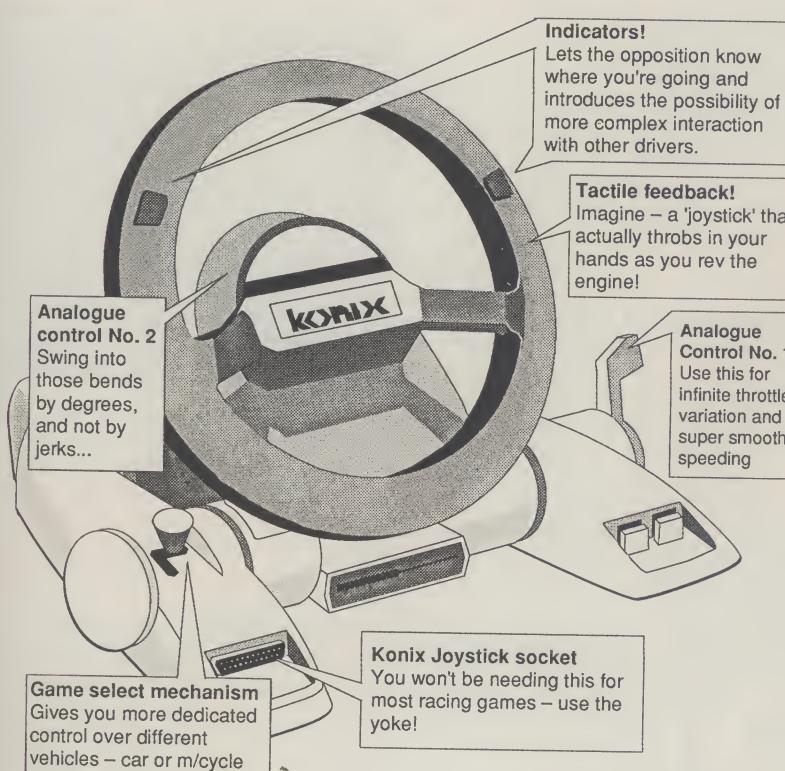
Some companies have made attempts to rectify the situation by producing yokes. These are shaped like wheels or aircraft controls to give you more of a realistic feel. These devices are however, the same old digital joystick in a different guise. They might look the part, but they certainly won't be any more responsive than your ageing Quickshot or Kempston model.

The answer is analogue controls. An analogue joystick, rather than simply turning microswitches on or off, produces a continuously variable signal depending on how far you move the stick off-centre. This is achieved by using two potentiometers, or variable resistors, one for movements in the x-axis and one for movements in the y-axis. These might, for instance, produce voltages between -1 for far left through 0 volts for centre to 1 volt for far right.

The difficulty with this system is that the computer cannot read analogue values directly, so these have to be converted into a digital form first (using an analogue/digital converter – the same gizmo used in sampling sound). This does of course mean that analogue joysticks are both more difficult and consequently more expensive to produce. You are therefore unlikely to find analogue joysticks becoming very popular for use with existing computers, although in the old days the BBC and the Dragon computer both had analogue control capability. Dedicated arcade machines and consoles are a different story entirely.

The new Konix machine, unlike the majority of existing consoles uses an analogue control system. This means that you could experience the same sort of sensitive control on Konix games as you do with Outrun and other similar arcade games. Combine this with the Konix chair and you could soon find yourself getting far closer to the feel of real motor racing than you ever dreamed possible without leaving your sitting room!

There's just one snag here: the Konix has yet to actually appear in the shops. Let's hope that other manufacturers take the hint in the meantime and start offering us more sensitive control mechanisms.



This is no yoke, it's serious. The Konix uses analogue controls, giving precise control over speed and steering. This, combined with other features as shown in this illustration, can give racing games a whole new feel. Come on everyone! Let's have cooler controls!



◀ Lap up Grand Prix glory in Virgin's *Continental Circus*

RELEASE BOX

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AMIGA	£19.99dk	OCT. 16th
SPECTRUM	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	OCT. 16th
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AMIGA VERSION

An excellent conversion that has inherited all the features of its arcade parent bar the unusual 3D glasses. It may not be the most spectacular release this year, but it is very playable and enjoyable — and that's what counts in the end.

GRAPHICS 8 IQ FACTOR 6
AUDIO 4 FUN FACTOR 9
ACE RATING 875

CONTINENTAL CIRCUS

VIRGIN/MASTERTRONIC'S lap of honour...

ONE of the more popular and unusual arcade racing games to emerge over the last couple of years is Taito's *Continental Circus*. The game itself did not really offer anything that hadn't already been exploited by many other *Pole Position* clones — what was unusual about it were the 3D LCD glasses mounted on a gooseneck in front of the screen. If you managed to get these positioned correctly and comfortably (not always an easy task, especially when the gooseneck was a bit worn) you were treated to a fast 3D display with opposing cars appearing to shoot out of the screen towards you.

The 3D effect has, not surprisingly, been dropped from this conversion, but in all other respects the game is identical to the original. Apparently the sprites and background graphics have been ported directly from the arcade machine, and they do indeed look very nice. Perhaps more importantly, none of the speed or playability of the original machine seems to have been lost on this conversion. This more than makes up for the loss of the three-dimensional element and really proves that the glasses on the original machine were more of a gimmick than an essential accessory.

Continental Circus puts you in the seat of a high performance racing car, competing against 100 other drivers in a series of Grand Prixs set in Brazil, America, France, Monaco, Germany, Spain, Mexico, and Japan. Each course is progressively harder and you must have attained a specific ranking before you can compete on each track. You begin with a rank-

ing of 100, so you certainly have a lot to prove.

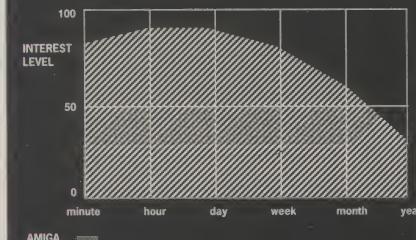
Although the controls are reasonably responsive, steering round bends or other cars takes a little mastering at high speeds. It is all too easy to slide across the track into a slower vehicle or billboard and end up trailing smoke. If you do happen to collide with something your car is damaged but you still have a short amount of time to steer it into the pits. Once there your crew rush out, repair the damage and get you back on the road again. Rather helpfully the clock is stopped while this is happening.

One thing to be careful of if you do crash is to make sure you stay in the middle of the road as you pick up speed again. That way the passing cars will attempt to avoid you by passing on either side. Attempt to veer right or left before you have picked up enough speed and you are likely to find another driver coming up fast from behind resulting in an infuriating second collision.

Should you have a double collision or take too long to crawl into the pits then your car explodes in a spectacular ball of flame. Providing you have time left on the clock you can continue with a new car but you will still have lost valuable seconds.

In a similar manner to US Gold's *Out Run* you have a limited amount of time to reach the next checkpoint, which you must do if you are to continue to the end of the course. Take too long and you will end up back on the grid again, and with a lower ranking. You will find

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Quite a challenge that should keep you coming back to the track for some time.

yourself making a real effort to achieve sufficient ranking to qualify for the next course in the series, especially as you get to the harder locations. It's intensely annoying when you repeatedly come off the road at the same curve and end up losing valuable seconds or crashing completely, but extremely rewarding when you finally get it right.

Continental Circus offers fairly simple gameplay, and while the graphics and sound are good they are not as complex as those found on many recent 16-bit games. Having said that the game scores on its playability, which is of course the most important aspect of any racing game. It also has that addictive 'One more time' quality that keeps you coming back for more. Definitely one of the more successful arcade conversions of this year.

● Laurence Scotford

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Commodore Amiga screenshot



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RELEASE DATE:
29th NOV. '89

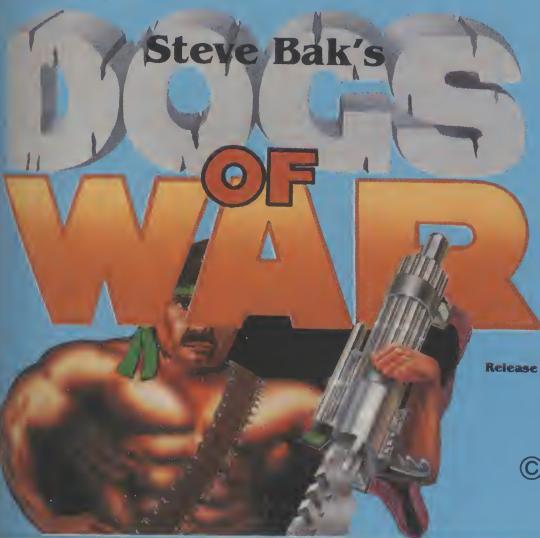
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Also, just released Steve Bak's 'Dogs of War'.

Steve Bak, author of the highly acclaimed 'Goldrunner' and 'Leatherneck', has joined forces with Elite, publishers of the definitive arcade war games; 'Ikari Warriors' and 'Commando', to produce the ultimate game in this classic genre. Drawing on the comments made by thousands of 'Ikari'/'Commando' enthusiasts, Steve has designed a totally new action-war game incorporating features that these classics SHOULD have had:

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UPDATES

THE LATEST CONVERSIONS GET THE ACE TREATMENT...

AMIGA



3D POOL

Microprose Amiga £24.99

All previous pool sims on any computer have been limited by a rigid viewpoint; Microprose's offering, however, allows almost limitless ways of eyeing up your shot with a unique 3D system which rotates the table.

Most of the aspects of pool are here: you can apply spin, play trick-shots and cannons, vary the power and angle - in fact, just about everything apart from swerving one ball around another. It's a mite tricky to get into, because you haven't got a cue to line anything up with (you have to rely on the 'centre of the screen' in relation to the cue-ball), but is ultimately rewarding because of the freedom it offers. It'll be a long time before you beat your first opponent, though - so be patient!

The one big question mark is why it's a fiver more expensive than the ST: some additional sampled crowd tunes don't affect the gameplay to a great degree, and apart from that the action is much the same. A good simulation without many frills, it should please pool fans, but then pool fans have been getting computer pool since 1983 and there don't seem to have been any major advances in gameplay - the rules of the game take care of all that.

ACE RATING: 725

F16 COMBAT PILOT

Digital Integration Amiga £24.95 PC Version reviewed Issue 20 Ace Rating 952

Amiga owning flight simulator fanatics can now breath a deep sigh of relief. Those masters of simulation, Digital Integration, have finally released the Amiga

version of *F-16 Combat Pilot*, and it's the best of the bunch.

DI's latest masterpiece has you strapped firmly into the cockpit of the highly sophisticated F-16C Fighting Falcon. Your objective is to successfully complete five missions representing the possible

rôles of the F16. These are Scramble (air to air interception), Hammerblow (offensive counterair operations), Deepstrike (interdictor strike), Tankbuster (battlefield close air support), and Watchtower (reconnaissance). Once all five missions have been successfully flown you are allowed to take part in operation conquest, which is a full-blown campaign.

There is also a training option which gives you the opportunity to practise free flight and landing, as well as each of the set missions. If you are a new player it is best to make full use of the training option before you tackle any of the missions for real.

The Falcon is a deceptive aircraft in many respects. It is surprisingly easy to get into the air, and you will soon find yourself doing rolls and loops with ease. The aircraft's stability is quite incredible and the in-flight systems do tend to look after you if you try to overstretch yourself or the falcon. Having said that, landing the falcon is a fairly tricky manoeuvre which takes some intensive practise to master. You will also find that getting the aerobatics right is not so simple when you've got a couple of Migs on your tail.

The one thing that becomes quickly apparent as soon as you get the falcon in the air is the realism of achieved by the program. As with other Digital Integration flight simulators, the ground detail is minimal for speed, but the response and feel of the aircraft is superlative. The attention to detail that has also been a hallmark of DI's productions is certainly not lacking here. You want to take a squint to one side to see what's flanking you, or look over your shoulder to locate that mig that has entered your radar's blind spot? No problem with this simula-



tor, all-round views can be obtained with one key press!

As if the excellence of the flight itself wasn't enough you can also save your pilot's log for future use, create your own weapon configurations (which can also be saved), and set specific weather conditions. If that still isn't enough then why not hook up to a friend's machine and engage in a one-on-one dogfight via a modem or serial link?

F-16 Combat Pilot has taken nine man years to develop, and playing it you can feel the quality

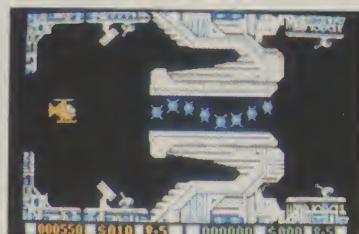
of the work that has gone into this production. Considering that *F-16* retails at the same price as many other inferior games it also represents very good value for money. If you are a connoisseur of Flight Simulators then this is an essential addition to your collection. If you are only looking for a single flight simulator to buy, then without question this has to be the one.

ACE RATING: 970

ST

BLOOD MONEY

Psygnosis ST 24.95: Amiga version reviewed July Issue Ace Rating 732



After tackling the baddies in *Menace*, you thought you'd take a little vacation; and what better way to spend your hols than on an alien-killing safari? Well, that's what Psygnosis have got in mind for you: four worlds of death, destruction and sun-tan oil. The situation is this: it's a jungle out there, and nature comes red in tooth and claw, so what you need is handy weaponry. Spread throughout each world are a number of equipment shops, where you can purchase such handy gadgets as three-way fire, bombs, extra lives - all at a cost, however. How do you get the money? By killing aliens. Simple.

In fact, *ST Blood Money* is a little simpler than the joystick-busting Amiga version, and emerges better for it. The music and sound effects are a little weedy and the scrolling slightly jerky, but the gameplay, though tough, is at least compelling. Worth a look.

ACE RATING: 740



MENACE

Psyclapse PC £24.95 Amiga version reviewed Issue 15 Ace Rating 678

As we have come to expect from Psygnosis' Psyclapse label, the graphics in Menace are superior to the average PC game. But on every other count there is nothing here that you haven't seen in other shoot-em-ups. The game sets you as a lone fighter attempting to defeat the six evil rulers of the planet Draconia. Each one is encamped in a different scenario and each has to be tackled in sequence.

Your fighter begins with a full shield and relatively unsophisticated firepower. As you collide with the myriad alien life forms besetting you your shields are gradually depleted. If they should be completely run down your ship will be destroyed. Fortunately your firepower can be upgraded in the time honoured 'collect the add-ons' manner. This is done by destroying all of the aliens in a single wave.

When the last alien explodes it deposits an oblong tablet. Flying over this will gain you a thousand point bonus. If you have time though you can pepper the oblong with shots and turn it into a more useful item like a canon, laser or more shields. The extra bits are pretty much essential too. In the later scenarios the opposition don't leave you much of a margin for error so you need all the help you can get.

Inevitably you are greeted at the end of each scenario by an end of level guardian. These have a weak spot which if hit enough times will cause them to explode. Unfortunately life is made more difficult by having to avoid the

large number of missiles being constantly emitted by the swine. Succeed in destroying your adversary and you are rewarded with progression to the next level.

Although Menace doesn't break any new ground it is a very playable and attractive PC shoot-em-up that certainly wouldn't look out of place in the most impressive collection.

ACE RATING: 625



MICROPROSE SOCCER

Microprose PC £24.95 C64 version reviewed Issue 17 Ace Rating 915

Over recent months there has been a gamut of soccer games for 16-bit machines ranging from some really dire efforts through to all-singing, all-dancing first class simulations. Fortunately Microprose Soccer falls into the latter category.

When the first version of the game for the C64 was launched, back in February this year, it was awarded an impressive Ace Rating of 915, and rightly so. At the time it was easily the best soccer game available, although now Anco's Kick Off provides strong opposition.

This conversion to the IBM PC has lost none of the superb playability of the original game. An overhead view of the pitch is used to good effect, and enables you to see exactly who is in control of the ball at all times. It also allows a wide variety of kicks to be implemented ranging from a simple chip shot to scissor kicks and banana shots. The game is accompanied by a rather strained sounding ditty from the PC's speaker. There are some very nice touches too. Goals, for instance are shown again in TV style action-replays, complete with a video rewinding effect.

The game implements two sets of rules: good old Association Soccer and Indoor Six-a-side American rules. There are four competitions that can be played: Microprose International Chal-

lenge, World Cup Tournament, Soccer League, and Two Player Friendly.

The game can be played with either keyboard or joystick, although I wouldn't recommend the former option unless you have very dexterous fingers! Gameplay tends to be quick and eventful with many goals even though the maximum length of play for a single match is twelve minutes.

PC owners looking for a quick

armchair dash across the pitch need look no further. Microprose Soccer is a definite winner.

ACE RATING 900



BAAL

Psyclapse PC £24.95 ST Version reviewed Issue 19 Ace Rating 726

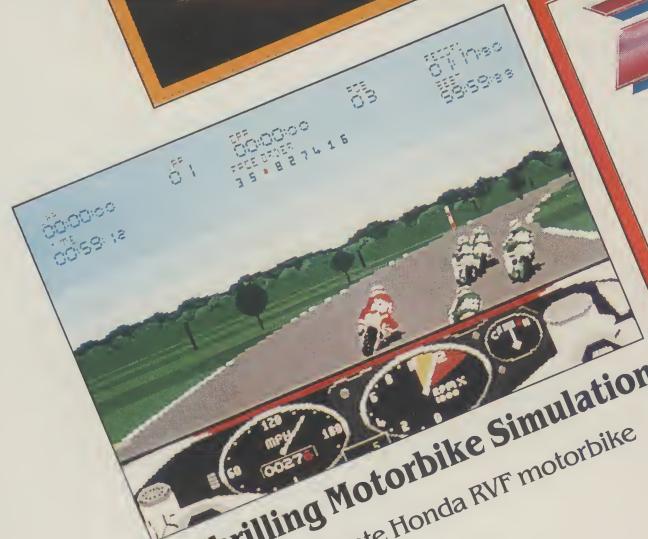
In the tradition of good old Hammer Horror an unsuspecting archaeologist uncovers an evil that has lain hidden for thousands of years. The removal of an ancient plinth releases the demon Baal who takes possession of a top secret war machine with which he intends to rule the world. A crack squad of Time Warriors is quickly set up — their objective is to find and destroy Baal and return with the Time Machine.

Baal is basically a very attractive looking platform game. You have to guide each of the time warriors through Baal's lair, which is of course populated by a number of devious traps and monsters. There are some obstacles which have to be thought about if you are to get past them, which saves this from being a run-of-the-mill jump and shoot affair. There are also extra weapons to be collected to ease your progress through the game. You'll need them too — the lair is a fair size and certainly not easy.

As with all Psyclapse games, the animation is excellent and complemented by nicely drawn multi-layered backgrounds. The PC version looks as good and plays just as well as the Atari version, and although this is by no means the world's most original game it does promise more lasting entertainment than most efforts in a similar vein. A worthwhile buy.

ACE RATING: 700

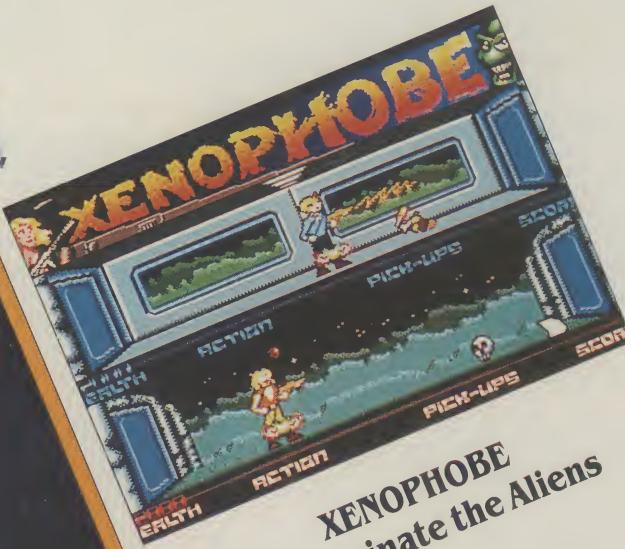
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GAMES: SUMMER EDITION

US GOLD £19.99, C64 version reviewed issue 15, Ace Rating 753

More joystick wagging from the masters of sports simulations, Epyx. This time the scene is the 1988 Olympics in Seoul. The game is apparently officially endorsed by the American Olympics team, which of course has absolutely no bearing on its qualities. There are eight different events to compete in: Sprint Cycling, 400m Hurdles, Uneven Parallel Bars, Rings, Pole Vaulting, Archery, Hammer Throwing, and Diving.

Some of the sprites look a bit blocky in comparison to many ST and Amiga games, but the superb three dimensional background graphics more than make up for

this. These are well-demonstrated by the superb zoom across the stadium at the end of the opening sequence.

Some of the events, like Archery, are easily mastered, but Diving, Rings, and Parallel Bars all

require a degree of skill that will take considerable practise to acquire. This is no problem as there is plenty of opportunity to practise individual events before competing for real.

Any one who enjoys sports simulations is going to love this game, which has to be Epyx's best yet. All of the events are easy to learn, but present enough of a challenge to keep you amused for some time. As an added bonus there are also attractive medal ceremonies. A must for all joystick athletes.

ACE RATING: 800

SPECTRUM +3

APB

DOMARK £14.99, ATARI ST version reviewed issue 25, Ace Rating 762

APB was one of those arcade games that, while it was far from advanced on the graphics and sound front, scored highly in the playability stakes. Colourful, cartoon style sprites and easily mastered gameplay gave it an appeal lacking in many more sophisticated machines. It casts you as officer Bob, a hard-working highway patrolman trying to keep up with his daily quota of arrests. While screeching round the streets in your car arresting minor offenders, you may also have to follow up an All Points Bulletin for the arrest of a major criminal. Once you have him, it's back to the sta-

tion to squeeze out a confession.

When this latest Tengen conversion appeared on the Atari ST it looked fine. The programmers had managed to capture the same amusing cartoon qualities of the original coin-op. The Spectrum version suffers seriously because of the loss of this aspect. While the sprites are all well drawn and animated, the monochrome green display looks dull and manages to make the game appear lifeless and uninteresting.

This version is still highly playable however, and if you are a Spectrum owner who liked the arcade original then you can probably live with the inadequate graphics. I can't keep anybody's interest for long though.

ACE RATING: 680

HILLSFAR

US GOLD £24.99, C64 Version reviewed issue 21, Ace Rating 732

Hillsfar is another SSI/TSR game in the Advanced Dungeons and Dragons series. Having suffered the abominable dirge that accompanies the title screen you are presented with a set of 'Camp Options' that allow you to load and save characters, or create new ones.

Once you have chosen the character you wish to play with then the game begins with a ride to the town of Hillsfar. This involves an arcade style sequence in which you control the speed of your horse and its jumping. To get to the town in one piece you must leap over the objects in your path.

Within the town you are free to explore as you wish, and can follow any quests that become

apparent during your exploration. There is also a further arcade sequence to be enjoyed by entering the arena. The game now becomes a primitive combat affair.

Enter a building and the view changes from 3D with map to a large Gauntlet style perspective. Inside the building you can explore further, opening chests, and avoiding guards and floor traps.

Hillsfar is nicely presented, and the gameplay is pitched quite well, but there is not really much here to keep you entertained for long.

ACE RATING: 750



ST

TV SPORTS: FOOTBALL

Cinemaware, £24.99, Amiga version reviewed issue 18, Ace Rating 892

The ST has certainly had its fair share of sports simulations, and numbering among those are plenty of attempts at capturing the essence of Soccer. American Football sims are a lot harder to come by, but gridiron fanatics need look no further, Cinemaware have finally released the ST version of the ultimate American Football game.

If you are already familiar with Cinemaware's interactive movie software then you will not be surprised to learn that graphically the game is excellent. During normal play the grid is shown in a high 3D perspective from the Offence end, but when a field goal is attempted an impressive 'Kicker's eye' perspective is adopted. Additionally there are some attractive TV style sequences at half-time and before the game.

From the main menu it is possible to view game schedules and team standings as well as playing exhibition or league games. There is also a fairly essential practice

option which allows you to try out various plays as either offence or defence and to improve your punts and field goals. Once you are feeling confident it's off to the field for a real game.

For each down you have a short amount of time to call a play before the view of the grid appears. During the actual play the computer controls all the players, bar the one or two under human control. This feature is intelligent in as much as the computer gradually learns your style of play and tries to emulate it.

Unless you hold a game over to view it at a later time, all other games in the league that do not involve human players are played simultaneously. By holding games you can then view them to observe future opponents' tactics.

American Football fanatics will love this game, but if you are a beginner, don't worry. It's not too difficult to get into, and there is a comprehensive booklet on the rules of the game included with the software. There is also a lot to learn by simply sitting back and letting the computer play itself. Unreservedly recommended.

ACE RATING: 900